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# **AFRICAN INTRIGUE**

**Alfred Batson'**



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TO  
R  
WHO IS NAGEL



## PREFACE

### It is nineteen-eleven—

The jigsaw of diplomacy is cutting the peace of Europe into the puzzle that defies solution. . . . France and Germany are straining for territorial expansion in Africa. . . . In Morocco a dissolute Sultan has created a situation favorable to European intervention. . . . France sends an expedition to Fez. . . . Germany wants a share of the spoils. . . . France is alone in Europe after the defeat of her ally Russia by the Japanese. . . . Great Britain is noncommittal. . . . It is Germany's chance to strike a blow at France's hold on the Sudan and Great Britain's dominance in Egypt. . . . The German junkers are in the saddle, and the sword of *Kultur* rattles in its scabbard. . . . Paris and Berlin exchange polite notes while the Krupp factory works overtime. . . .

France becomes alarmed. . . . She realizes her helplessness and offers Germany certain concessions in exchange for a "hands-off" policy in Morocco. . . . Germany hesitates. . . . She is playing for big stakes. . . .

Enter the Wilhelmstrasse's Intelligence Bureau. . . . An expedition of "big-game" hunters is sent to Africa. . . . It is composed of a geologist, a botanist, and the inevitable militarist. . . . Before starting on safari a young German is hired as head porter. . . . Hardly is the "big-game" hunt under way when the sudden appearance of the German cruiser *Panther* in Agadir harbor, Morocco,

is the spark that threatens the world. . . . France cannot deny the challenge. . . . The threat of a German naval base on the Atlantic seaboard awakens the British lion. . . . It is a tense moment. . . . The peace of the world hangs in the balance. . . .

Before many days the status of the "big game" hunters becomes that of spies. . . . Their troubles multiply as they plunge deeper and deeper into French territory. . . . Finally they vanish. . . . Berlin never hears word of them thereafter. . . .

Since the day they crossed the Togoland-Sudan frontier their disappearance has been a subject of rife speculation in Germany. . . .

Here is their story, told for the first time. . . . It is a tale of suffering and failure, devotion and hatred. . . . As you read it you will understand why the teller has never spoken until now. . . .

# **AFRICAN INTRIGUE**



THOUGH I had only suspicions to go on, it seemed to me that day that the arrival of the *Moewe* was as propitious for what I imagined to be going on behind the scenes as though the German Secret Service had arranged every detail. To outward appearances it was merely the arrival of the regular mail boat from Germany a day ahead of schedule, but the West African coast in that sweltering hot June of 1911 was so much on the *qui vive* that I liked to read between the lines much more than appeared on the surface.

For I knew Von Krocke, and I felt certain he had not called me up from the Kamerun only to lead a big-game safari into the jungle—whatever his message might have said. Big-game safaris do not start out in the middle of the dry season. Yet should the intent of his message have been genuine, there were men in Togoland better acquainted with the country than I to lead one.

But I had done some intelligence work for him when he was a District Commissioner in the Kamerun, and now that he had been promoted to a more important position—one never heard precisely what it was, though I suspected him to be the all-powerful head of the German Military Intelligence in Africa—here was my reward. Or so I liked to think.

I knew that the entire coast from Gibraltar down was

seething with political intrigues—what with France and Germany on the brink of war over Morocco—and I felt that something was about to happen in Togoland in which Von Krocke wanted to have a man he could trust. I flattered myself that he knew he could trust me.

And perhaps because I was young and young men are not always summoned by directors of military intelligence, I was apt to magnify out of all proportions a simple offer of a job at good pay.

There was a tenseness in the air in those days; the tinder was ready and the torch blazing and, I repeat, I was young. Whatever was up Von Krocke's sleeve, I wanted to be in if it promised adventure; and with the impatience of twenty-two years I wanted to waste no time.

Nor can I be blamed, for I had been on several safaris and found them dull work at best. Hunting animals has not the thrills of hunting men, or of being hunted, and if war came to Togoland, I knew it would be down on the coast at Lome, not hundreds of miles back in the parched hinterland.

Already I had been a guest at Government House for a week, and my suspicions should have been at a low ebb, for on the railroad siding lay an outfit, complete even to trade goods, I had assembled on Von Krocke's orders for four whites and ninety carriers.

We were to be gone three months. All he had told me was that we would shoot above Mangu, close to the Upper Volta frontier, some of the finest big-game country in Africa in those days.

This assurance should have been enough, but I had an odd intuition that would not down. Nor did he help allay it.

"Patience, my young friend, patience," he had said, patting my shoulder and smiling enigmatically. Patience was one thing I had not.

He had told me to be ready within twenty-four hours, and, as my three companions had not arrived, I hailed the coming of the *Moewe*.

Thus when she dropped anchor in Lome harbor on June 29, 1911, I was in the shade of a canoe house on the beach, out of sight yet where I could see everything, to get a preliminary view of her passengers. In them I might find a clue.

On the beach the scene was the usual one whenever a boat arrived from above the equator.

There was the small group of minor clerks from the foreign firms, two or three runners from the hotels, and always, always, in any similar group from Gibraltar to the Cape, the die-hards whose homesickness had led them out into the broiling sun to curse Africa and feast their eyes on a ship from the homeland. Similarly, somewhat aloof, were one or two black-frocked priests on hand to welcome recruits for their mission stations in the bush.

Lower down were a crowd of natives shouting and frolicking, waiting for the ship's whistle, to launch their surf boats to bring in passengers. Lome had no long pier in those days. Ships anchored offshore, put their passengers over in basket chairs, and native boats brought them to the surf line, native shoulders to the beach.

I had seen it all a hundred times, and it should have held little interest for a man four years in Africa. Yet here was I

foregoing a needed siesta, hugging the shadow of a boathouse, and feasting my eyes on the rusty *Moewe* to satisfy a suspicion.

Looking back on it, I might have been something of a die-hard myself. I was tired of Africa and the speculative life of a palm-oil farmer, and I was about to get out when Von Krocke's message had come. It offered good pay, and in it I sensed something more than the usual dull big-game hunt. In the language of the present, I had "debunked" big-game hunting. For me there were no thrills left. I knew the overwhelming advantage on the side of the man with the gun. And camera hunting then was unknown.

Von Krocke offered a safari that might not be a safari. I was suspicious of it from the start, and that suspicion led me to accept. I wanted something to happen, anything to break the monotony. Thrills, adventure - my blood was rich and red. Now, perhaps, in the *Moewe's* arrival was my answer.

I looked intently at the tiny ship riding at anchor on a mirror-like ocean, sweltering like myself under the inescapable African sun. If the passengers were the usual big-game hunters, I had yet time to back out. I would see. . . .

Finally came the melancholy hoot of the *Moewe's* whistle. The small groups on the beach moved farther down and with much shouting whenever a competitor was overturned, the blacks walked their boats out past the surf line, clambered aboard, and were off in mad dashes for the dangling "mammy chair."

Suddenly I saw someone I knew coming across the beach

diagonally opposite me. Instantly my imagination went to work. I could vision the entire intrigue behind his coming.

It was the second boy from Government House carrying a flock of umbrellas.

The sight of him meandering along chewing a pineapple stem caused my heart to skip a beat. I saw a vindication of my suspicions.

Von Krocke had not come himself, nor had he sent any of his foreign aides, as would have been the case were he expecting persons with official connections. Instead here was the listless Negro, and I counted it an excellent stroke to disarm any suspicions that might have been aroused. For at that time one had to be careful. Even the bushes seemed to have eyes and ears, spies and informers were everywhere.

Suddenly my heart fell as quickly as it had risen, for I recalled that the French consul-general was in Bingerville on the Ivory Coast, while the Britisher was a month away in Cape Town, recovering from an attack of malarial fever. I was letting my imagination get the better of me, and I gave my attention to the beach.

The first surf boat to come racing back held a rotund, middle-aged woman who hesitated and protested with a fervor belying her mediocre looks and shape when the black wanted to carry her in. Such goings on were not for her, and with one hand tightly holding down her long skirt she shooed him away while the boat threatened to be swamped.

The black looked at her a moment, then came forward again, and she started talking to him in Eewee. It was very

bad Eewee, but it established her, and with a disgust the clerks and hotel men turned away. They might have known. This was no wife for a hard-working planter. One of the priests stepped closer to the surf and called something across the water. With much bashfulness and half-suppressed giggling she permitted herself to be lifted atop a black head and brought ashore. Much handshaking and bowing followed, and the priests led her up the beach.

Meanwhile other boats had come in with mail and cargo papers, and the clerks pounced upon them, anxious to get out of the broiling sun.

My interest was taken by a foreigner in a white suit who, while already beyond the surf line, was distinguishable by the way he was continually removing his canvas hat and mopping his forehead. That put him in a special category, and I watched him intently. He wasn't familiar with the African coast, or never would he have bared his head to the sun, even for the briefest moment.

As he came in closer I saw that he was bald headed; it was a shiny baldness that even at this distance seemed to mirror the glare from above, and as he stood up to be carried in I could see he was short and fat. Rolls of soft flesh were where his chin should have been, his suit seemed to be sagging with perspiration, and even while the black was stumbling through the surf with him he mopped at his neck, then over the top of his head and down the inside of his shirt.

I began to have misgivings.

As the black lowered him to the beach he hesitated as though in a trance, for a wave lapped around his feet, and

he seemed not to notice. He was glued to the spot as one spellbound.

I knew what was attracting him. I was familiar with the scene and doubtless had been guilty of the same reaction on my arrival years before. I thought of a cobra entrancing its victim.

Even at this distance I could see his questioning face. His mouth dropped open, and for several moments he stood like a man condemned.

And no wonder, for the first view one got on coming ashore at Lome in 1911 would have taken the heart out of a stone lion. It was this that had hypnotized him.

The long sandy beach on which the surf incessantly thundered, the dirty white sheds and warehouses that were the outposts of the deathly silent and parched town, and on each side stretching as far as the eye could reach long rows of brown bush, stunted and lifeless, sere and gaunt. Still farther back the low rolling hills that were blotted out by thick clouds of dust, dust that needed no wind to raise it, dust that already was in one's nose and eyes and ears. And overhead a sweltering sun that glared out of a blueness so vast it seemed to stretch to infinity.

Neither in the air above nor on the earth beneath was there a sign of a living thing, save the few humans who were hastening out of the shimmering radiance. Six degrees from the equator not even the vultures brave the air at noonday. Nothing but bleakness and dejection, poverty of God and man, nothing but a pitiless sun, sun, sun.

More than one man has come no farther into Africa when that panorama has confronted him and his way of escape

was at his back, sweltering like himself on an anemic ocean.

Then suddenly the fat man seemed to rise out of himself. A smile broke over his ruddy face, slowly at first and then with increasing animation. I leaned forward into the sun and followed his stare. For a moment I couldn't understand, and not until I heard him say fervently, "*Deutschland über alles,*" did I know.

His attention was held by the large flag over the Government House. Drooping spiritlessly on its staff, it nevertheless infused new life into him, and when he mopped again at his head, his sigh seemed less of a groan.

Already I was convinced he was one of my party.

I could not imagine those flabby shoulders affording a back stop to the kick of a heavy Mauser. The sun would take his excess fat off in streams, and if he ran true to precedent I saw him aiming an elephant gun at a sand snipe. I placed him as one who had made a fortune and now on retirement was turning, like so many of them, to big-game hunting as the supreme sport. I knew better, and so did they within the first week. It was work and damned hard work. They seldom came back a second time. I doubted that this one would last a month, let alone three.

And it would be in keeping that he would have an armory capable of blowing Lome off the map. Further, that he would have no big-game permit.

A guttural voice coming across the water drew my attention. I looked out and saw another passenger clinging to the gunwales of his boat while he furiously harangued a black who was waist deep in the water. What the argu-

ment was about I couldn't tell, save that it seemed totally one-sided. The black said nothing; he had timorously withdrawn a few feet, and I saw a look on his face of blank amazement.

Finally, after more shouting by the white man, he came forward again. The foreigner put one leg over his shoulder and was about to leap up when a wave swerved the boat, he staggered, and the passenger fell back into the bottom. Then came a pandemonium to which the previous indignation had been mild. The air was filled with curses.

It was such a display of temper that I looked uneasily along the beach and was glad to notice that save for the boys and the fat man, who was now under an umbrella held by Von Krocke's boy, I was the only witness.

The blacks were intently watching the scene and muttering among themselves, and I surmised that their unfortunate companion knew little German: hence the argument. Or what little he did know had been scared out of him by the blustering new arrival.

Then, suddenly, came the climax.

As the black turned around I heard him say something over his shoulder and in a flash the passenger drew back his foot and kicked him viciously between the shoulder blades. It was a sickening crunch that even I could hear fifty feet up the beach.

A moment later he was sitting on the black's head, and as they came closer the fat man ran down to them, unmindful of his umbrella, waving his arms and shouting. And as though cowed by what had happened, the other native boys took off up the beach at top speed.

I saw now that the newcomer was beating a tattoo on the black's chest with his heels, and my resentment flared up. I jumped to my feet.

This was no way to treat a native. The sooner the white man learned it, the pleasanter would be his stay in Africa. The pleasanter also would be my life on the safari, for I had placed him as a second member when the fat man ran toward him.

Then I saw I would arrive too late. The black already had his passenger on the beach. As he set him down he turned as though in a panic and took off at top speed after his companions. He wanted no more of the white man, and I couldn't blame him.

Meanwhile I was close enough to get a good look at the newcomer, and what I saw sent an electric spark through me.

He was standing there straight as a ramrod adjusting a monocle with one hand while the other nervously was slapping a riding crop against as fine a pair of riding boots as I had ever seen. I saw now, and my heart jumped at the discovery, that what I thought was an ordinary white suit was nothing of the sort. It was a military uniform. I looked again to make sure—there was no mistake.

He wore white riding breeches and a tight-fitting white tunic. A white-topped military cap was tilted jauntily over one eye. He was about my height, and I would have guessed that he was perhaps thirty-five.

It was not his clothes that attracted me especially, but his manner. He stood with a bearing that had made his type feared by every black in the country, and by many

loyal Germans as well. He was the exponent of Kultur, the personification of the Prussian militarist.

The fat man was addressing him as "Herr Major," and because of the fact that I mistrusted him at first sight, the blood rushed to my face.

With him here the safari loomed more surely than ever as the intrigue I had hoped it to be. I knew at that time, when the peace of Europe hung in the balance, no German army officers were going off on hunting trips. Rather they were poring over maps of the French frontier.

Here was my adventure. Here was what I wanted, something was about to happen—I could sense it. The episode with the black faded from my mind, and I wanted to shout my good fortune aloud.

I turned and watched them go up the beach. Herr Major grumbling and cursing, and the boy from Government House floundering along trying to hold an umbrella over him. Behind them the fat man was struggling to open one for himself. It was clear who was the important person.

All the time the fat man was shouting what seemed to be an apology for having been brought ashore first, for having taken the better porter, and from his tone I suspected, as he continued, for being alive. But Herr Major was paying no attention, striding up the beach, his chest out, his air majestic. I thought of Napoleon returning from exile. I was laughing, I was so happy.

A grating sound distracted me, and I turned to find a boat from the *Moewe*. A young cadet leaped out as I approached.

"Are those the only passengers?" I asked.

"One woman missionary."

"Sure no others?"

"Positive, only three. We made a forced run."

Where was the fourth . . . who . . . a forced run . . . !

My mind was racing. I was turning away when he interrupted me.

"Heard the news?" There was only one topic on the coast then, and we needed no preliminaries.

He was smiling, and I saw he badly wanted to tell something.

"No. What?"

"The Kaiser gave up his trip to the North Sea and has ordered the fleet to mobilize." His smile broadened to a grin.

"Fine," I said; it was all grist to my mill. "What about England?"

"England is saying nothing. We have only France to beat. It will be easy."

I looked up the beach and saw the broad shoulders of the officer heading for Government House. His hat seemed more recklessly set than before. I thought of his closely cropped bullet head, his monocle, his air of assurance. It was a thrilling moment. I was in the midst of an intrigue, even though I was only in charge of porters. I thought of wily old Von Krocke, "Patience--patience."

The army officer—the fat manufacturer—the missing fourth man—it was all a jumble—but I would soon know.

WHEN I arrived back at Government House after having given a final check-up to our equipment, I found Von Krocke and the newcomers secluded in a conference. Von Krocke was taking no chances with eavesdroppers, for one of his foreign aides was posted outside the door. He could not be disturbed under any consideration.

I was impatient for news, but the guard merely shrugged and smiled. He didn't know who the two were, he knew nothing about me, it seemed, save that I was engaged to lead a safari into the jungle.

I was about to give up when I heard Von Krocke's voice from within the room. He was evidently talking to a servant.

"Go down and see that the gentlemen's luggage is sent here immediately. Herr Major has . . . how many, Herr Major?"

"Four," came a gruff voice, "one trunk, three bags."

"And Doktor?"

So my manufacturer was a doctor.

"Three bags, only three bags, small ones. They're mostly my equipment. I hope I'm not giving you too much trouble. I . . ."

I was forced to smile, for I recalled his profuse regrets on the beach. I wanted to hear further, but a loud "har-

rump" from the officer cut him off, and I could picture him wanting to express his regrets with much stammering and apologetic nervousness.

The discovery of the size of their baggage confused me more than ever. One was a doctor with three bags "mostly equipment" and the other an army officer with one trunk and three bags. How much did the officer expect to take into the jungle? And how much of it was uniforms—and white gloves? And what of the "equipment"?

Eventually I gave the whole thing up in confusion and greatly relieved the guard's mind by going to my room. There I changed into a dressing gown, went down to the cement bathing place at the rear of the house, and had a house boy play a hose on me. I felt so good that I went back to catch up on my siesta, but it seemed that no sooner had I climbed under my mosquito netting than a servant was shaking me and bidding me to dinner. I had slept the entire afternoon.

To get to the dining room I had to go through a long hall at the end of which was another guest room. The door was open and, as I approached, I heard voices. I paused a moment and listened. They were Von Kroeke's and the officer's.

Here was my chance. I coughed loudly, shuffled my feet, and made as much noise as possible. And I was rewarded.

"That is Nagel," I heard Von Kroeke. "Nagel, Nagel, come here."

I needed no second urging.

As I entered I took in the room at a glance. Von Kroeke was standing with the officer who still wore his jaunty cap,

though he had changed his coat to a heavy, buff military affair, and on the left breast I saw two rows of service stripes. From a center button peeped the ribbon of the iron cross. The white breeches had been replaced by light blue trousers, and the military boots were now standing in a corner, freshly polished. Everywhere lay piles of clothing, a variety of military effects and underwear.

Then suddenly I became conscious of the fat man. He was sitting gingerly on the edge of a bed, fanning himself and trying without success to smother continuous sighs. Occasionally he would mop at his neck. He was still perspiring, though the night cold was coming up, and I knew that in an hour his white linens would be insufficient. But he seemed too exhausted to care much about anything, and I got the feeling that he was making himself as inconspicuous as possible.

What interested me most in the brief moment of crossing the threshold was that as Von Krocke stepped back from the officer I saw that the latter was holding a rifle. I needed but one look at the large bore and the telescope on the barrel to recognize it as the finest Mauser model made for big game, a .1075. For myself, I had always been content with a .404, an English Jefferies. But here was a gun on which I was itching to get my hands. Properly used it was capable of stopping anything in Africa. I felt somewhat ashamed of my Jefferies and my American-made Winchester 30-30.

On top of a trunk was a pistol. A shotgun was crosswise over a valise, and I saw that it had a beautiful stock of rich, dark walnut.

"Herr Major von Harden, permit me to present Fritz Nagel, who will handle your porters. Fritz, this is your leader."

I extended my hand, but Von Harden's interest seemed centered on his rifle. There was a brief half nod from his closely cropped head; he gave me a fleeting glance, a frown rather than a smile, and turned his attention to the pistols. He did not speak.

I stood with my hand out, awkwardly blushing for a moment before feeling Von Krocke touch my elbow. Good old Von Krocke had come to my rescue. His keen blue eyes had taken in everything. He swung me around.

"Fritz Nagel, a confidant of mine who will handle the porters," I heard. "For the work you are about to undertake he is the best man in West Africa."

"Herr Doktor Müller, who will be with you, Fritz."

This was the fat man, my manufacturer. He arose from the bed, offered a pudgy hand, and beamed at me. The lines around his eyes crinkled. He seemed the essence of good-humor, and I liked him immediately.

"I am sure our host is not exaggerating," he said.

I glanced back at the officer and found him desultorily polishing his glass, his attention, if anywhere, focused out a window, his back half turned toward us.

"Nagel can speak five native languages," Von Krocke was going on; "he is a dead shot, and if any man can take you into the jungle and bring you out safely, he can. I would rather trust myself with him than with any other man in Togoland. He——"

"Please, Herr Von Krocke," I broke in. I knew why he

was going on this way, but it was so pointed it might have defeated its own end. He smiled, slapped me on the back, and went to Von Harden.

Müller engaged me in small talk about suitable clothing. Wisely he had brought only light materials. I reassured him that I had provided the blankets. I tried to edge him off away from the others where I could talk to him on the subject that was uppermost in my mind when suddenly I heard Von Harden.

"For myself," he was saying, "I would rather fight. The French need a lesson. Another 1870. Lyautey is in Fez with 40,000 troops, and unless Germany takes decisive action now we will be left out when France grabs Morocco. We must assert ourselves. All Germany wants to fight. Bah," he was spluttering, "these politicians. Von Bernhardi is right, 'Only by the force of arms can we attain the world leadership that is rightly ours.'"

I heard no more, for a servant had appeared, and Von Krocke drew back and addressed us all.

"Gentlemen, dinner is served, and I suggest we eat immediately so you can get a good night's rest. You are leaving at three in the morning to avoid the heat of the day. Shall we . . . ?"

Then, perhaps because of the rebuff I was smarting under, I spoke up:

"But, Herr von Krocke, I do not yet know where we are going."

"Ach," he was laughing and turned to me, "didn't I tell you? You go from here to Atakpame, then overland to Sokode and Mangu on the edge of the Upper Volta."

That was clear enough. It *was* the big game country. My heart fell, with the speed of a pelican's dive. It *was* a safari, after all. I hesitated a moment, there was another point on which I wasn't clear.

"You told me to outfit for four men. We are only three."

"Ah, yes. Herr Doktor Rodenbach is awaiting you at Atakpame." He beamed again and started for the door.

"Rodenbach from the famous Rodenbach?" I broke in impulsively.

I knew of Rodenbach's great work. He was a geologist, perhaps the leading geologist of the day. It was he who had gone into the hinterland of German Southwest Africa and located mines that threatened the monopoly of Kimberley and the Orange River districts. We Germans owed everything in Africa to him.

Suddenly another thought came to me. If it were the great Rodenbach the trip took on still another significance. He did not have to come to Togoland for big game. I had not yet heard the whole story.

"Yes," Von Krocke said, "the great Rodenbach."

Now I would have my answer. I plunged ahead and shot it at him. This time he could not refuse me.

"And we are after big game . . . ?"

He hesitated a moment, and I was conscious of a tense nervousness. It was as though I had thrown a bombshell and the others were waiting for it to go off.

Then evidently his mind was made up, for he half turned and was about to speak when like a flash Von Harden stepped forward and broke in. I saw him looking at me

with little short of a glare; his chin jutted out and his shoulders seemed to stiffen as he spoke.

"Do I understand that you are in charge of porters?" His words were clipped, short, decisive, and final.

"Yes, Major." Again I felt the blood rushing to my face.

"Herr Major," he blurted out without moving his heavy lower lip.

"Yes, Herr Major."

"Then permit me to tell you, if you have not already been told so, that you are to attend to *your* duty—*your* duty *only*. All other details of the trip I will handle. Any information necessary for you to have will be given you when the time comes." Then, after a pause: "And we are after big game."

He turned his back on me. It may have been my imagination, but it seemed to me that I distinctly heard his heels click; he drew himself up and strode from the room. Von Krocke followed without a word, and the little doctor straggled after, mopping his neck. I brought up the rear.

I followed them along the hall and down into the dining room, and as I went behind Von Harden to get to my seat I was blank to everything going on around me save to the discovery that now without his military boots he was exactly my height. And for all his military training I saw that his hands were soft and white.

It was not until the strudel came that I was conscious of what was going on around me. If anyone spoke to me I must have answered, but I have no recollection of joining in the general conversation.

I was appraising the man opposite me, and I knew that

once we got beyond the edge of the last native village it might be a different story.

A month before in the Kamerun I had trotted twenty-four miles through a steaming jungle in one day laden down with a ten-pound rifle and a full bandolier. Could Von Harden do that? I wondered.

And I doubted that Rodenbach would know the native dialects in the districts toward which we were heading. Had Von Harden considered that? I'd be a valuable man on the trip, and it seemed to me that Herr Major was getting off on the wrong foot.

The natives have a saying that the jungle is greater than any man's God, and I exulted that I had worshiped at her shrine. She withheld few secrets from me. What did Von Harden know of her? Or the pathetic little doctor?

But I determined then to curb a hasty temper and make no trouble. I would say nothing about Von Harden's insults. After all, he was the leader and an army disciplinarian. And perhaps I was imagining too much.

The big thing was that the trip promised adventure. That was what I wanted. And if Von Harden insulted me, or I thought he did, I would overlook it. The trip was what counted. I would be tolerant.

Had I been able to foresee the future that night as we four white men drank the Kaiser's health in good Rhine wine, perhaps this account of the trip would never have been written. More was to happen than God or man or native fetish could foretell. I was standing on the brink of a living hell.

**B**EFORE we pulled out of the station the following morning, Von Krocke drew me to a corner of the dark platform. I had not had a chance to talk with him alone since the previous evening.

"Ach," he said, "you must know everything at once. So in spite of four years in Africa you are still a boy. Ach. I wish I had your enthusiasm."

"But," I protested, "this fat man is no big-game hunter, and Rodenbach is not coming here for a safari alone. I'll have to know eventually, why not tell me now?"

He did not answer. Instead he looked quizzically at me, and I caught the suggestion of a smile playing about the corners of his mouth. But he would say nothing. He merely pressed my arm and smiled. Good old Von Krocke. He was a German official of the old school. I wish we had some of them today. He had his duty to perform, and neither friendships nor anything born of man would he allow to interfere with the carrying out of that duty as he saw it.

It was to be years before I was to see him again, but despite all that has happened I have never forgotten his look of mixed sternness and humor as we stood in the half gloom of that station in Lome on June 30, 1911.

The beauty of an African dawn was everywhere around us. A star-filled heaven and long, thin shafts of orange

coming up out of the East to creep forward inch by inch until suddenly one is aware the stars have disappeared and it is morning. There is a brief period when no birds sing; then suddenly, or so it is in the lesser jungle, the air is filled with an opulence of song, and with one stupendous outpouring the luxury of the earth awakens after a night's sleep. A monkey gently chides the intruder; a flock of crimson birds flash across the ceiling of green; a huge white crane appears out of nowhere; a doe stares entranced from a thicket; the air becomes filled with the languorous scents of a thousand flowers, and the bud that a moment before was closed tightly for the night opens in majestic splendor and stretches toward the sun.

Von Krocke and I stood there while the engine panted beside us, as though straining to get away and come to rest again before the sun had reached its zenith. Von Harden was already somewhere in the couch with Müller. I had seen the last of our equipment go aboard when suddenly Von Krocke called me aside.

"Little boy," he said in English, "Von Krocke can't tell you what you want to know, but I promise you will not be disappointed."

I looked at him but he gave no indication that he would go farther with the dénouement. Instead, he surprised me.

"Nagel, you keep those bright eyes open, yes! You see everything, yes! When you come back you tell Von Krocke, yes!" And he winked.

In that unexpected gesture I think I got closer to him than I had ever been before. I understood him and he me.

I felt that I was being taken into his confidence. And I thought I had the answer to my suspicions.

The shrewd Von Krocke was not going to lose out with the Wilhelmstrasse through any blunder on the part of a military officer. I was to keep an eye on the party and let him know everything that happened.

"Herr von Krocke," I said, "I'll report. You can trust Nagel."

Suddenly the whistle blew, the train shuddered, stretched; I jumped aboard, and we were off. Before it had gathered speed Müller came waddling along to the back platform to thank Von Krocke for his hospitality. Von Harden was nowhere to be seen. The fat little doctor and I remained on the platform until we rounded a bend and Lome faded into the half light of early morning.

The great adventure had begun.

**I**N THOSE days the regular run from the coast inland took eleven hours, though it was only 180 kilometers. But we were in a special train and wheezed into Atakpame well before noon.

Meanwhile my two companions had been getting their first taste of Africa, the real Africa that was not to be found down the coast, the Africa of the hinterland that has all the coast's vices and none of its virtues.

Because of the thick dust we stirred up we could not open the windows, and almost before we had been out an hour, when the sun was hardly up, the coach became a roaring, stifling furnace. Flies, dust, and heat, we had them in plenty, and by the time we came to the short stop at Agbelouwa the little doctor showed signs that all was not well with him.

He had exhausted a dozen handkerchiefs, his whites were soaked to a dismal gray, and his sighs were undiminished. Yet through it all he put up a brave front. He smiled, scoffed at the discomfort, and assured me that within two days he would be leading the party.

His eventual capitulation that morning was largely my fault—or rather it was Von Harden's, for I had been enjoying a talk with him when our leader passed and Müller asked him to sit with us.

Instead Von Harden ignored us, going to an opposite window and becoming absorbed in a gang of native road workers, chained as always and laboring under the stern eye of another exponent of Kultur.

Whereupon I commented that he was the loser, not we, for now I could not ask him to enjoy a cool bottle of beer with us. Instantly Herr Doktor sat up.

"Beer, beer, you have beer on this train?"

"I've a case buried under a pile of wet blankets."

"Ho, ho," he roared with laughter, "that is one on Herr Major, ho, ho, that is funny! Fritz, Fritz, you are all right. Ho, ho, that is a joke!" He mopped at his neck, sighed between laughs, and got up.

"But wait until the next stop," I interrupted. "It's in the goods train; we can't get to it until the train stops."

I thought from the look on Müller's face that the train would never stop, and in his enthusiasm I saw a stroke of luck for me. Here was the first step in a hastily conceived plan.

At Nuatja I led him back to my cache of Pilsener, and how his face lighted up when he saw it.

"Ho, that is funny! That is a joke on Herr Major. Ho, Fritz, you are a great fellow."

But the joke was not entirely to be on Von Harden if I had my way. No sooner had my perspiring guest emptied a bottle than I had another opened and in his hand. And by the time he reached the fourth we were sitting in the open door of the train, our feet dangling outside, and the dust swirling around us in great gusts. One of his arms was around my neck, and we were life companions.

Then gradually and methodically I set to work. I learned that he was a botanist from the University of Berlin. He was not interested in big-game hunting (he laughed as he told it), and he doubted he could fire a rifle if he had to. What he was interested in at the moment was getting another bottle of beer. He got it. It was to assuage the pain in his badly burned head, he told me.

I was unrelenting, urging him on and doubtless taking full advantage of him, but I had no conscience. I had to know. Finally it came.

"France and Germany are embroiled over rival claims to Morocco," he was haltingly explaining a moment later. Did I know——I did. But I said nothing further. I was impatient, and he went on:

"The German Army would like to fight, and the army rules the country. France wants to negotiate. She wants to see what England will do in case of war, and since France's ally, Russia, was so badly beaten by the Japanese, she feels very much alone in Europe. Ach, it is just as well. The French are trouble makers. But England says nothing. England is wise. She is our real enemy. The Fatherland must go on. We are chosen of God, Fritz. That is true." He was in deadly earnest.

"But Morocco," I broke in, "what about Morocco?"

I had to wait until he drained the bottle. Then he hic-coughed. Finally he staggered to his feet, hurled the bottle out into the bush, and slumped heavily beside me when the train rounded a curve.

"Morocco . . . Morocco . . ." I was afraid of interruptions.

"Ah, yes, Fritz, Morocco. Now in return for all German claims to Morocco, so she can have a free hand there, France offers us two strips of the French Congo. We know that land, so does France. That's why she offers it. It is no good. But we say nothing definite. We hesitate. Because we know a territory we might want—only it has never been explored. We don't know what its possibilities are."

"Possibilities, unexplored, botanist, geologist." I was getting more interested. This was what I wanted to know. With the leads he had already given me I could fairly well piece out the reason for the safari that wasn't to be a safari. But I dared not interrupt.

"So while we are prolonging the negotiations, what is simpler than to send a secret expedition to investigate? *Jah?*" He laughed and threw an arm around my neck. "If the land suits our purpose, we demand it instead of the Congo swamps. If it doesn't, the French are none the wiser that we have looked for ourselves. And we ask for an offer elsewhere."

He spread his hands in a gesture of simplicity, shrugged his shoulders, and smiled. "Can you see it, Fritz?"

I could. I could see also that his bottle was empty. His head seemed redder than ever, and his face was streaked with perspiration and dust. On his chin were remnants of beer foam. But I was not through. He got another bottle. Was I sure he was not imposing upon me? I was. He started to apologize for drinking my beer, and I had a hard time bringing him back to the important topic.

But once he wound his fat fingers around a bottle he was no longer his own master.

"So you and Rodenbach . . . ?" He smiled. Then he swayed toward me again.

"Smart boy, Fritz. Exactly. I am a botanist. I am searching for rubber prospects, coffee, bananas, cotton, anything, everything. Rodenbach for minerals, petrol. Herr Major is looking at the land from a military standpoint. Meanwhile we shoot a few big game —see?"

I saw. But only part way.

"And this territory we're going to . . . ?"

"Gurma. Do you know it?"

Gurma—Gurma—slowly it came to me. I didn't know it, and I doubted that any other whites did. I once had met a black who claimed to have been through it. He said it was virgin jungle and swamps. He would never go back, and he was a native. It was the back of beyond, the edge of a lost world.

Without waiting for an answer he went ahead. "We want to go right through to the Niger—it's unknown territory in there for a radius of a hundred miles. That's the place we want to explore. We slip across upper Dahomey, avoid the villages as much as we can. We shouldn't be detected. If we are, we're hunters. Simple, isn't it?" Again he spread his hands, and I felt an elbow in my ribs.

For a moment I said nothing. Gurma—it lay northeast of the Togoland—Upper Volta frontier, perhaps 400 kilometers in French territory. But if the German Secret Service thought for a moment we could slip 400 kilometers through the Upper Volta without being detected by the villagers, they didn't know much about Africa. Von Krocke had wisely provided me with plenty of trade goods.

He knew, as I knew, that we couldn't get far without being seen. There were a dozen questions I was asking myself.

"Simple, isn't it?" he asked again.

"Yes," I replied, "it sounds so."

"Well," he said, "now you know everything."

So that was the whole story. For weeks I had been worrying about it, and now I had the answer.

From the surface it promised all the adventure I could want. In addition it would satisfy my craving for danger, for something to happen. It was international in scope—it was secretive—I saw myself a spy of the first order.

I would be a follower of Dr. Carl Peters who, in 1884, pushed his way into lower East Africa and after exploring the district concluded treaties with the native chiefs that brought us Tanganyika, a territory as large as southern Germany. In the same way Togoland had come under our flag. In both instances England was asleep and France busy in the Sudan. Now, when suddenly they awakened to find us cutting in on their monopoly, they cried "Foul play." Trouble was brewing. There would come a world showdown on Africa. Perhaps we four white men were to start it.

The thought of what we were about to undertake made me a little giddy. I was thrilled beyond words.

Meanwhile a score of monuments marked Peters' contribution to the Fatherland. Why should we fare worse? The prospect of seeing the fat little doctor in bronze amused me. I visioned him mopping his neck, his mouth open in a sigh of resignation. Von Harden I could see, white gloves, monocle, riding boots, and pert military cap over one eye.

And Rodenbach? What would he be like? Would he be another Von Harden or a flabby, timorous Müller? I wondered.

Suddenly the doctor brought me back to reality. "My head, my head," he said. "Fritz, everything is beginning to become white."

I recognized the symptoms--overexposure to the sun. He took off his newly acquired helmet and was mopping, mopping again. I saw that his head was livid. The following day it would start to blister, and if we didn't care for it it might become serious. All our medical equipment was packed in the boxes around us there in the goods train, and we were not unpacking until we reached the last outpost—Sokode. That was the usual custom. But luckily there would be a doctor at Atakpame.

At the next stop I helped him out, along the platform, and into the coach. As he slumped into his seat I glanced up. Standing in a corner and glaring at me as he polished his monocle was Herr Major.

Now that there was nothing he could tell me I forced a smile at him. He only glowered the harder and gave his attention elsewhere. He had me nettled.

I asked myself what I had done to provoke his displeasure. It seemed that I could do or say nothing that pleased him. But why?

Was he suspicious of me? . . . Von Krocke knew I was a loyal German. Was it because I had asked questions? . . . I couldn't lead a safari if I didn't know where we were going. Or was it, perhaps, because my years in Africa had taken out of me the servility he wanted to find in the leader

of his expedition? Had he heard defiance in my voice? Had he read rebellion in my manner?

If so, then we were going to have a rough trail, for I hated all that Prussian militarism and Kultur stood for. I had seen enough of them during my term in the army at home, and because of them I had left Germany for the freedom Africa offered. Had he sensed this when he had first seen me? I suspected so. Well, if that were true, he would soon learn that the iron heel could not grind me down again. Africa had put new life in my veins, I had learned to stand on my own feet and to take insults from no man. In Africa we were free.

If all this were behind his frigid personality, I was ready for him, and every turn of the wheels brought us nearer the inevitable reckoning. His Kultur would stand him in little stead three days lost and searching for a water hole.

But perhaps again I was imagining things. I determined to wait and see.

**B**EFORE we had come to a stop at Atakpame, Von Harden had jumped out, and when I emerged I found him talking excitedly with a small group of foreigners.

Among them I recognized Nechtel, the district commissioner, whom I had known as an under officer in the Kamerun. The others were various of his aides, military and civil, and one or two school teachers - proponents of the German scheme of colonization.

Above the greetings arose the clamor of discordant voices bravely attempting to follow a deep bass to the tune of "Dio Wacht am Rhein." At the finish there was much guttural shouting, desk thumping, and loud flung invectives, until finally the tiny piano resumed and the song was repeated. I looked behind me, between the coaches, and saw the usual whitewashed schoolhouse on the opposite side of the tracks. Above it, hanging limply, and I often thought prophetically, was the German flag. It was a scene familiar to all who had been in German Africa a few days.

Instead of having the time for rest from their labors on the roads, the unfortunate blacks, still chained, had been herded into a stifling building to have more Kultur dinned into them.

Their first taste had come when they had forcibly been

taken from their villages to work off exorbitant taxes in building roads. And now their Berlin schoolmasters considered the opportunity too good to be thrown away.

But the short-sighted colonizers at home could not be made to understand that a black in six weeks' training could learn one verse of a song by heart—and forget it in one hour. This was Kultur, this cramming down a black's throat of a language and customs distasteful to him. And it was this that caused me and many another loyal German in the colonies to deplore the aggressive way the Germanization of our dependencies was being undertaken by the junkers in Berlin.

As for Atakpame, I saw in that instant it was another typical German colonial town. I lost interest in it, good German though I am. I like the blacks too well to enjoy being a party to their bondage.

Nechtel disengaged himself and warmly shook my hand. Then he motioned to a thin, gangling man under a green-lined umbrella who seemed to be standing a little apart from the others though close enough to be one of them. I noticed that he took no part in their conversation. Rather he was content to listen and peer at the speakers through thick glasses, meanwhile puffing casually on a native cigar. His skin was as richly tanned leather, and I saw that whereas most of the others, and I also, had handkerchiefs tucked in around our collars, he had none. His clothes had an "African" cut, and as he came toward us I saw that he was as cool as though he were strolling in Unter den Linden. It was obvious he was an old African hand,

the perspiration had long since been sweated out of his skin-and-bone body.

"Dr. Rodenbach, permit me! This is Fritz Nagel, who is handling your porters."

Rodenbach turned thick glasses on me, and I saw tobacco-stained teeth grinning at me from beneath a scraggly mustache that once had been blond. He seemed to take my hand somewhat indifferently, but before either of us could get beyond a brief smile we were interrupted by a loud wail from the train.

Looking toward it, we saw Müller seated on the top step of a coach and wiping his neck. His sun helmet lay below him in the dust where it had toppled. He was the picture of dejection. Yet the moment he was aware he had attracted us he arose unsteadily, forced a weak smile, and clambered wearily down to the platform.

I looked at Nechtel, tapping the side of my head. He understood and nodded. Then I turned to Rodenbach.

"That's Herr Doktor Müller who is going with us," I said. "It's only a touch of sun."

Rodenbach did not even glance at me. I saw him look disinterestedly toward Müller, then give his attention to the group he had just left, in whose center was Von Harden. The spectators seemed entranced by his white gloves, monocle, and riding boots. He was oblivious of their admiration. His interest now was all in Müller, who was being carried off the platform toward Nechtel's house by several servants, his bald pate gleaming in the sun like a flamingo's wing.

Suddenly Von Harden broke through the circle, stamped

out to the center of the platform, and took up a position, arms akimbo, while he glared after the botanist, his riding crop slap-slapping against a boot.

Simultaneously I felt someone pushing against me, and as I was forced aside I glanced up and saw the tall Rodenbach edging forward. He did not say anything, he only peered closer at the militarist, who suddenly cleared his throat and spat loudly.

Von Harden, staring after Müller, expressed more eloquently by his gestures than by any power of words what was his opinion of the new turn of events. Stooping over me, seemingly indifferent, I sensed that Rodenbach missed nothing as he stared through his thick glasses at Von Harden. There seemed to be an electric current in the air. I felt that if Von Harden should suddenly sneeze he would scare us all into a cold sweat.

A moment later I heard him rowing with Nechtel over the telegraph service, or rather lack of it, and I surmised he had been trying to get through to Loine and thence to Germany, but without success.

Suddenly he came over to me.

"Nagel," he said, looking back over the group, "get the outfit loaded onto Nechtel's carts immediately. Have the natives take them along as soon as the sun goes down. We will follow tomorrow afternoon and overtake them," and he strode away.

Rodenbach had meanwhile stood by listening intently and puffing on his cigar, but had said nothing. As Von Harden left me I saw the geologist shuffle around to watch after him as though he were a curiosity. Then he tugged

at his mustaches, sucked his teeth a couple of times, and sauntered away, but with many a side glance at our leader.

It occurred to me, while walking toward the goods train, that I had been standing with Rodenbach for several minutes, yet not once had he spoken. He hadn't even acknowledged the introduction; but I could not feel toward him the way I was beginning to feel toward Von Harden. Rodenbach was an odd character but a great one. He might be curt, but it was an African curtness, a silence that comes to a man accustomed to long, lone treks. The other was insolent. I was interested to see how the two would get along.

For the next half hour I was busy attending to the unloading of our equipment. It consisted of boxes, bales, crates, gun cases, and luggage.

Nechtel had provided us with several heavy two-wheeled carts, ideal for the rough road to Sokode, together with a score of natives who were to pull them.

At Sokode we were to lay over two or three days, unpack, and sort the stuff for the porters, then start overland in full safari style. So far we were not yet out of the Europeanized zone. Above Sokode we entered the district where the natives had not yet advanced to the semi-civilized state. There there would be no roads, only trails. It was the beginning of the big-game country.

Hardly had we finished the unloading when a servant arrived from Government House. Von Harden wanted me. I lost no time in responding. Here might be the dénouement.

I found him talking excitedly with Nechtel, and as I

waited I could not help but hear a bit of their conversation.

"It took me two hours to reach Berlin from here," Von Harden was saying. "That is preposterous. It should take two minutes. What is needed here is a wireless that will reach all our colonies in Africa, and Berlin as well. As the situation is now we are cut off one from another. Here is the strategic place for it. It is a military necessity. I will today recommend the erection of such a station to the war office."<sup>1</sup>

It was not about a wireless that he wanted to talk to me.

"Now, Nagel," he said, "we must have an understanding." It was coming.

He led me to a corner of Nechtel's office, where I saw several large maps hanging on the wall. He was turning them over searching for the one he wanted when I saw something that caught my eye. It looked familiar. I stopped him. It was a map of eastern Nigeria, and when I looked at it a second time I was forced to flush. Its presence here under the stamp of the War Office surprised me.

"Why do you hesitate?" he asked.

"I made it," I said. "I did it for Herr von Krocke when he was a district commissioner in the Kamerun."

He looked oddly at me before speaking.

<sup>1</sup>AUTHOR'S NOTE: Within a year after Von Harden had made his complaint to the Wilhelmstrasse, one of the world's most powerful wireless plants was being erected at Kamina, a little village outside Atakpame. It was begun and rushed to completion by the army. The entire plant when finished comprised a power house, receiving and dispatching rooms, stone houses for the foreign operators, and nine steel towers varying in height from 250 to 400 feet. It was one of the principal links in the chain of wireless stations Germany was building to reach from German New Guinea to Kweichow in China. Almost the first message received by it was a notification of the declaration of war in 1914. It was of such strategic importance that a few weeks later a mixed British and French force appeared and captured it.

"Ah, so then you should be just the man for the trip we are undertaking," he said. "If you like a little spice this should interest you." But there was no friendliness in his voice.

He was turning over other maps when suddenly he stopped at one of the French Upper Volta. On it I saw a large crisscrossed section along the Niger River marked "Unknown—1909." It was the last map of the district.

He took a pencil from his pocket, paused a moment to polish his glass, and started speaking. If he had been expecting to thrill me by acquainting me with the purpose of the trip, he was disappointed. Herr Doktor Müller had preceded him. But I would not tell him, and I feigned an interest. What he told me was substantially what Müller had said.

"We are going into the Upper Volta to investigate this piece of unknown territory along the west bank of the Niger. The trip is a secret, undertaken at the behest of the war office. We are to penetrate the country as hunters. We want to do nothing that will draw attention to us. Herr Doktor Rodenbach you know of; Herr Doktor Müller, who has distinguished himself by getting sunstruck," (the words were spit out venomously) "is no less famed. He is a botanist, perhaps the leading botanist in Germany. We will make camp, whenever these gentlemen come upon a section they want to investigate and stay until they have completed their work. Then we move on to another section. Carriers are to be provided at Mangu, specially picked men who will be loyal to us. The trip will be simple in the extreme. There is nothing to fear. We

are hunters. We might have come down from Timbuctoo, west from Zinder in the Civil Territory, or up the river from any of the southern provinces."

There was one question I wanted to ask. It would have a tremendous bearing on the entire trip. It could not be ignored.

"Very good, Herr Major," I broke in, "but if we are hunting big game in French territory have you——"

"I have everything that is necessary," he shot at me. "And I would thank you in the future not to ask so many questions. You seem to forget your position. You are not running the trip—I am. That is all."

Abruptly he turned toward the door, and I followed. He held it open for me. I went out into the hall, my temper again on edge. It seemed the more I became acquainted with the man the more he did to antagonize me. There seemed no basis on which we could meet.

I was walking along the hall toward the veranda when I remembered I had not yet had time to remove the grime of travel. Nor had I eaten. I went back into the house and found that a place had been saved for me at the table.

I was finishing my luncheon when suddenly I heard Von Harden's voice resounding through the quiet hall. "Nechtel! Nechiel!"

A servant replied that Herr Nechtel and the others were taking their siestas. Von Harden was adamant. "Get him out! Get him down here! Quick now!"

His voice grew closer, and I knew he was coming along the hall toward the dining room. As he reached the door he saw me. He carried a cable in his hand.

"Nagel," he said, "have you the goods packed?"

"Yes, Herr Major."

"Then be ready to start the natives along with them when I give the order. We have no time to waste. We——"

Nechtel appeared.

"What is it, Herr Major?"

Von Harden opened the telegram. "It's come," he said coolly, "it's come. Bethmanu-Hollweg is at last showing red blood. Look at this."

He read aloud:

*"The cruiser Panther is being sent to Agadir harbor, Morocco, to protect German residents."*

"Ach——" Nechtel got no farther.

"That is what we want," Von Harden was interrupting. "Now the French will be forced to fight. They cannot swallow such an insult. It means war!"

His voice was as calm as though he were commenting on the weather. He wasn't outwardly excited. His face was stern and forbidding.

He strode from the room followed by Nechtel in a dressing gown. I heard them for a half hour afterward tinkling glasses and drinking toasts. The broiling compound resounded to laboriously declared "*Hoch der Kaisers.*"

After luncheon I went out on the veranda, where I found Rodenbach in a chair, his head thrown back, his mouth open and his eyes closed. His scraggly mustache was rising and falling as he breathed, and occasionally there came a faintly audible snore. He looked anything but the great man I knew him to be.

The sound of my approach awakened him. He sat up and blinked at me.

"Have you heard the news?" I asked. "The *Panther* is being sent to Agadir harbor, to protect German residents. Von Harden says it will force the French to fight."

He blinked at me again. He was about to speak when the door opened with a crash and the Major strode out and came to us. Instantly Rodenbach sat up.

Von Harden fixed his glass in his eye and looked at me. "Nagel," he said, "we are starting immediately. We have no time to waste. Get your porters out. Quick now." He snapped his fingers.

I roused myself from the chair and was about to ask him if I had heard correctly. We could not start overland in the middle of the day. Further, Müller was in no condition to travel. It would be two days at least before he could be on his feet.

I felt that the time had come to give Von Harden an argument. He was glaring insolently at me through his monocle. I have never been one to avoid trouble, and I had fully prepared to dare him, let come what might. When I heard this order, the craziest he had yet given, I was on the verge of open rebellion.

Then I got a sudden inspiration. It came to me that I could beat him, not by opposing but by giving in. Suddenly I found myself smiling. I would let Africa beat him.

"Good," I said, "I'll get them on the road immediately." I arose and started down the steps, and as I did I heard Rodenbach speak for the first time since I had met him.

"Say," he said to Von Harden, "I want to talk to you. You can't make a Potsdam paradise ground out of Africa. Better men than you have tried it. Müller can't be . . ." Their voices trailed off, and I found myself laughing.

Rodenbach had spoken at last, and though he hadn't spoken to me I knew in that moment that he would be my friend for life. He had defied Von Harden.

Again my feeling of resistance set in, and I strained against the Major's overbearing manner. So he wanted speed, did he, this great Potsdam iron disciplinarian devoid of manners? Well, I'd give him speed. And he wanted to start in the middle of the day. That was playing into my hands.

Here was my first chance. I'd give him such speed that I'd run him ragged, and when he started to crack up I'd stand by and gloat over him. I was beginning to hate him. That was the motivating power in my acquiescence to his newest plan - I hated him, and it came to me with something of a sickening feeling that this was no way to start on safari. Yet he had brought it on himself. It was not of my doing.

I found the blacks in their quarters and briefly acquainted them with the news of our departure. Their leader was absent, and I left, giving orders that he was to come to me on the veranda. I was impatient to get back and hear more of this wonder man Rodenbach.

But when I returned I was disappointed. My chief characters were still there, but Rodenbach looked like anything but a man who was starting up country.

His head was thrown back, his feet were sprawled out,

and I heard again the half snore that was to become more familiar as time went on. His mustache was rising and falling, the entire scene was as though nothing had happened - so far as he was concerned.

From his appearance I surmised that if there had been more to the incipient quarrel than I had heard, he had not come out second best.

A glance at Von Harden proved I was right. His face was a brick red, as though his temper were seething and any moment might burst, and I saw that his riding crop was again flicking nervously at his boots. His chin seemed more firmly set than I had seen it before, his eyes were darting here and there with quick, short stabs, and as I came up they turned on me as he beat his leg the harder. Meanwhile Rodenbach snored in blissful detachment.

Suddenly the head runner appeared with several of his men.

They were of the Kposso tribe, good trekkers, and like most African natives insanely jealous of their honor as porters for white bwana. It was this that I was to play upon.

The leader addressed me in Eewee. Did he understand rightly that the white master wanted to start in the hottest part of the day? His runners had never heard of such a thing before, and while of course they were not thinking of themselves, they were afraid the white bwana might fall a victim of the sun.

"The white bwana has given much thought to starting now," I assured them, "and while he doesn't want to bring disaster to his black children, nevertheless, it is

important that he get to Sokode as soon as possible. He knows how the sun can strike down white bwanas and black children as well, but he must get to Sokode. Therefore he wants to start immediately."

This was received with mixed feelings. Some wanted to start, others were sure the bwana was crazy. There was much shouting, and a typical native argument would have set in with the usual din and clamor had I not interrupted. This time I spoke distinctly and slowly. I did not want them to miss anything.

"As much as the white master likes the Kposso people," I said, "he doesn't like to see them hesitate about starting for fear of the sun. He wishes he had Tchandjo carriers, for they are brave and fear nothing. They would go on day or night. Now he is afraid the Kposso people will stop at the first rest house and will be many, many meals getting to Sokode."

The jabbering lulled, and no sooner had I finished than I heard a snort from the veranda. It was Rodenbach, who was now wide awake and looking at me with a satanic grin. So he knew Eewee, and though he had been snoring he had heard everything. More and more I liked him.

Von Harden was mum. I walked up the veranda, and he stopped me.

"Tell Herr Nechtel to get our horses," he said. "We get out in one hour."

As I started into the house I looked back and saw that the blacks were disappearing toward the platform where the carts were waiting.

Nechtel received my message with a shake of the head.  
"Pretty hot to be starting," he said.

I went out to my luggage and recovered a pistol and a belt of cartridges. Then I found a mosquito netting to fit over my helmet, a blanket, and a water bottle. After which I sent the natives off, grumbling and racing out of the yard, still muttering among themselves and gesticulating toward the veranda where sat the white bwana.

Back again at the house I found Von Harden watching them, a puzzled look on his face. I mounted the steps and was about to open the door when I chanced to glance at Rodenbach. He winked at me, smiled, thrust out his legs, tilted his head back, and closed his eyes. The next instant he was snoring comfortably.

**W**HERE's that rest house, Nagel?"

We were two hours out, and this was the first time Von Harden had spoken to me. Not yet had we come to the first stopping place, nor had we seen the carts that set out an hour before us. What was more interesting to me, we hadn't even caught a sign of their dust.

"Somewhere near by," I said. "I'll ask the guide." I spurred up ahead and came abreast of the native Nachtel had sent with us.

As I passed Von Harden I saw that he was sweating profusely, his white gloves had been removed, and from the way he constantly kept tugging at his breeches leg I knew his military boots were giving him trouble in the hot sun. He did not seem bothered by the multitudinous insects, and he made no comment on the fact that I was wearing a net whereas he had none. Save for his incessant slapping at mosquitoes and flies, he sat as erect and composed as though he were on review in Berlin.

I knew this was the worst possible way to start a safari—the time would come soon enough when we would be sick of the sight of each other—but I reasoned that I could do no other. The olive branch was not for me to extend. I had tried to help him several times in the past and had been repulsed—none too gently, I thought—and

in the future I would let him go his own way. I was the head of porters. Nevertheless, I didn't want him sick at the start.

"Too bad you haven't a net," I said as I passed him. "This is the tsetse fly area." He gave no sign he had heard me.

The guide said our first stopping place was half a meal farther on, and Von Harden seemed pleased at the news. He even permitted himself an observation:

"Good, now I'll be able to get some water. Did you send any on with the carts?"

"I did."

We rode ahead in silence. The guide was first, Von Harden in the middle, and I brought up the rear. We were on Nechtel's ponies, and as they were used to the rough country the going was better than it might have been had we taken bicycles. Nevertheless, I envied Rodenbach and Müller, who were coming up behind us in chairs. Wise old Rodenbach, I saw again his wink, and I recalled his laugh on overhearing my conversation with the porters. Languid and disinterested though he appeared, he missed nothing. He was the only one who had dared to talk back to Von Harden.

The country was not uninteresting. Low rolling hills in the distance, and wide veldts intervening, frequently rocky but more often given to a heavy loam that now was parched and scaring to the touch. The air was beginning to cool, though the sun was high. We were still sweating from the heat shimmering up from the scorched earth. That is a curious thing about tropical Africa—after the

sun goes down and the night cold sets in, the ground remains warm for hours.

Some time later, when we rounded a turn in the road, I saw the guide suddenly spur ahead with Von Harden following, and I took the opportunity to go to my water bottle. It was warm and stale, but it was water, and I recalled that the guide had provided for himself, but Von Harden had nothing. The carts were not in sight; night was coming on.

When I got up to them I found Von Harden standing disconsolately at the door of a rest house, established by the government for foreigners along the important roads. We were about ten kilometers out of Atakpame.

Around him were a dozen residents of a decrepit village that stood off the main road. There were a flock of mangy-looking dogs and naked children, together with several women. It seemed to me their prime interest was in Herr Major's attire, his rakish cap and his fine boots, though his monocle was not left out, judging from their conversation. They had seen glasses before on foreigners, but a single eyepiece disconcerted them, and in true native fashion, when we rode away a few minutes later, they were still jabbering as heatedly as when he first stepped to the ground.

"The carts left over an hour ago," he said to me. He paused a moment to slap at an insect on his neck and curse.

"Didn't you tell them to wait here for us?"

"I had no such order."

He frowned, cleared his throat, and spat several times.

As he rode ahead he shouted over his shoulder, "Tell the nigger we've got to reach the carts. I've got to have water and something to sleep on. . . ."

The answer was what I might have expected.

"They're not following this road. They're on a short cut. They want to make a record. The white bwana was in a hurry."

The way the carriers had reacted to my questioning of their stamina amused me. If I knew African natives these men wouldn't stop until midnight, and only then for the briefest rest. If they were twenty kilometers ahead of us now, by morning they would be thirty.

We rode ahead in the failing sun and frequently heard the cries of animals and saw the sudden movement of bush as we approached. Spoor marks were everywhere. Antelope, reithok, and many hyenas. Birds and monkeys chattered at us from high over our heads. Soon we came to a bubbling spring.

Once I came on Von Harden waiting silently in the road and pointing to a giant baobab tree. In it I saw a lone monkey watching us, a look on his face of deep curiosity.

"Take a shot at him," Von Harden said.

"Why?"

He gave me a fleeting glance before answering. "Let me see what you can do with a pistol."

I laughed and rode on. We Afrikanders didn't shoot monkeys to display our marksmanship. "I'll show you some other time," I said. I knew what I could do with a pistol. I was reasonably proud of my ability.

Suddenly I heard him shout. There was a crashing in

the tree top, and when I looked back the monkey was not to be seen. Von Harden had stoned it out.

We continued on for some time with the sun gradually lowering and I anxiously awaiting its disappearance, the coming of night and the contrasting coldness from which my blanket would succor me.

A few kilometers past the scene of the monkey episode I came upon a depression in the ground about a foot in diameter and several inches deep. Around it were several others, and near by the ground was littered with twigs and thin branches pulled from the tops of young trees and bushes. I called ahead to Von Harden and waved him back. He had ridden past without noticing anything. When he rode up I pointed to the hole.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Elephant," I said. "Want to go after it?"

"We haven't rifles."

"Don't let that stop you. It's a small one. Use your pistol."

He looked off into the low bush at the side of the road. It was barely stirring in the faint breeze. The land was rocky and uneven. I wanted to see him go off that trail after an elephant, even a small one, while still mounted, but he refused.

"No, let it go. We'd better catch up with our equipment."

That night we did not find the carts. We rode until the cold was too much for us, and when we struck a rest house on the side of a small stream we decided to call it a day. The guide built a large fire outside the door, rolled up in

some extra clothing he carried, and we heard no more of him.

I found the hard bunks a welcome respite from a harder saddle, and with my blanket protecting me from the night air I was as comfortable as the proverbial bug in a rug. For a long time after I turned in I heard Von Harden throwing wood on the fire and thrashing his arms about his chest; he must have been bitterly cold, but he said not a word, nor did he give any evidence of wanting to effect a compromise. He was inflexible.

The sight of his white military coat, his jaunty cap, and the reflection of his monocle was the scene that lulled me to sleep, supperless.

He surprised me in the morning by turning out seemingly more rested than I. By the time I had come out into the dying light of the fire he had already been down to the stream for a swim, and I found him drying his face on his shirt.

"See any crocodiles?" I asked.

"Never bothered to look. Be ready to start in ten minutes."

There was no humor in him, and the fact that he might narrowly have missed a horrible death feasted him not in the least.

We awakened the guide, put out the fire, and took to the trail long before the first sign of dawn appeared. As lightly armed and as few as we were, it was a gamble to start at the hour when the carnivores were feeding, but I would not warn Von Harden. He had more to learn. I was confident that with a pistol I could defend myself

against whatever might drop from a tree or leap from behind a bush. Now that he was in such a hurry he had to take the same chance.

But, wiser than I, the guide took the lead and announced our presence with a rollicking song. He explained it was a fetish to keep animals away.

I, in the rear, took a cue from him. I was again being childish, and I relented to the point of singing at the top of my voice.

Von Harden kept between us and seemed amused to call back to me to tell the guide that he had seen orange eyes circling us, while I appreciated that we carried no lights and therefore he had seen nothing.

But I was in no mood to retort. The day had opened with a conspicuous victory for him. His casualness over his narrow escape from crocodiles was galling to me. Nor did I get any suspicion that it was a pose.

Soon after the sun came up, we rode into a native village where the headman was glad to give us *carte blanche*. It was the breakfast hour, and we had no trouble in assuaging our hunger with baked yams, a kind of mealie biscuit, and quantities of the usual thin, sickly-looking milk from native cows. On leaving we were presented with a brace of freshly killed chickens and a quantity of corn pancakes wrapped in a native cotton cloth.

That day went off without any trouble. We were in a more difficult country, and though we made less time than the day before, the traveling seemed to be more pleasant.

It might have been because Von Harden called a halt well before noon, and we enjoyed a refreshing sleep in the

shadow of a baobab tree. Perhaps he was beginning to learn. When we awakened, we ate the chickens and pushed on.

The third day was much the same. The country was beginning to give way to more low hills than we had seen heretofore, and the night had been colder than the one previous. We stayed at another rest house where in the morning Von Harden greeted me with the statement that he felt so good he could ride straight east to the Indian Ocean.

I was somewhat stiff, but it soon wore off once we were in the saddle. Early that morning we went through the important village of Agbandi, where Von Harden was delighted to find several natives who could speak fair German. He surprised us as we were leaving by producing another quantity of food which he had bought with coins the natives could spend at Atakpame. I went through my pockets and found I hadn't a copper with me; everything was in the carts ahead.

Late in the day I shot an antelope, and that evening, when we settled down in the rest house halfway to Blita, I had the native build a spit. The antelope was young and tender and Von Harden complimented the guide on his ability as a cook. I noticed he said nothing about the shot that brought it down, a perfect placing under the left fore-leg and straight through the heart with little wastage. And I took special care that he should note my skill, for when the native cleaned it I determined on another offering of the olive branch. We could not go on this way, and I reasoned that I would be the more generous character in

lowering my flag. Perhaps he had already suffered enough.

"The guide says that even a native with an arrow couldn't have made a cleaner kill," I said as we were standing about eating with our fingers and I was bemoaning the absence of knives and forks.

He went on tearing at the food.

"The cooking is perfect," was the only answer I got.

Again I felt my face flush. I wondered what I had done that he should be so uncivil to me. Was it because I was the head of porters, a menial in his eyes and not a genius like the others? Or was it his usual way of treating people not of the army? I was in a quandary. He had reached me on an especially touchy subject, for I was proud of my shooting; and I wondered what this great soldier could do with a pistol that he should minimize my ability. I determined to find out.

The following day, sometime toward noon, we met the outrunner of a native chief with his retinue coming down from Sokode.

As the man came up grinning, I spoke to Von Harden.

"We've got to give the old chief something. It's the etiquette of the trail. They all expect it."

"Give him something . . . a nigger?" He was glaring at me again, fumbling with his glass.

"Well, nothing that's valuable. Just . . . anything. It's . . ."

"Damn giving him anything," he shot back. "The German government pays tribute to nobody, least of all a nigger chief."

"But it isn't tribute, it's-----" He had ridden ahead and left me.

Once the chief met us, I surmised what he would want, and I was itching to shout it after Von Harden, but on second thought I said nothing. I would rather see the black bring it up himself. I knew he would: they never failed. This would be amusing. I spurred ahead.

He was a chief of the Kabure tribe, and long before we saw him we heard the rolling of tom-toms announcing his approach.

Ahead came the usual fanfare of advance warriors, picturesquely garbed in bright loincloths and fantastic head-dress.

The chief was no more outrageously dressed than are most African chiefs. He was wearing a battered black English derby, and though the day was sweltering he had on, and I knew he had hastily donned it for us, a heavy astrakhan coat under which his black body sweated and glistened and gave out an odor that kept me to the windward of him. In a long string of chairs behind him came various of his wives, ministers of state, ju-ju officials, and the usual rabble of dignitaries. There was something majestic about them all, lolling back in their fly-filled cubbyholes and smiling at the world with all the aplomb of the Russian court.

As he came by I dismounted and greeted him in Eewee, complimented him on his own good health, and assured him that though I had traveled for many meals through the bush, never before had I come upon a chief who was so

truly a divinity. He in turn assured me that there was a great deal in what I said, he had heard it before, and he knew it to be true.

He was going down to Atakpame for a conference with the district commissioner. I was on a big-game safari above Mangu. Meanwhile I heard a commotion behind me, and on turning I found Von Harden surrounded by a horde of warriors. They were interested in his monocle. They couldn't understand how he could lean forward and wave the children away from his pony without its falling out.

They jabbered, screamed, and thumped each other on the backs and set up a terrific din. So much so that the chief became interested. He, too, gave his attention to Von Harden, and I saw that while the monocle attracted him, it was the jaunty peaked cap that held him.

Then, as he removed his battered derby, looked it over in evident scorn, and again gave his attention to Von Harden's cap, I knew the worst was about to happen. I had guessed correctly.

"Tell the white man," he said, "that the great chief of the Kabures admires his hat and wishes he had one like it."

"He wants your hat," I said.

Von Harden, having a hard time holding his pony in the center of the tumult, disregarded me.

"The great white bwana," I told the chief, "admires your taste. But as much as he would like to give you the hat he wears, he has no other with him."

The chief ran true to form. He lost no time. He dashed off his once black derby and passed it to one of his aides,

who pushed his way through the crowd milling around Von Harden. Then he thrust it out at arm's length.

"He wants to exchange it for yours," I shouted.

Instead of answering me, Von Harden did an unlooked-for thing. I saw that the hottest argument around him was over his boots, and at the moment I spoke one native reached out and touched the leather. Instantly Von Harden's crop flashed through the air, cutting the man sharply over the back, across his face, and on his shoulders.

The jabbering quieted as if by magic. For a moment I thought we would have a serious incident on our hands. The chief spoke sharply and recalled his derby. The cavalcade massed together, and I saw several men swing their arrow sheafs around in front of them. The chief clambered out of his chair, drew himself up proudly, and there was a deathly silence.

Quickly I spoke out.

"The white bwana is new to Africa," I said. "He has had a touch of the sun. His hat is a fetish that saved his life. In Atakpame he is a very great bwana. He meant no harm. . . ." I was floundering around saying words, sentences, anything to ward off the threatened onslaught. If I could get their attention away from Von Harden we were safe.

But the chief was not to be appeased so easily. He drew himself up to his full height, wrapped his coat around him with an ominous gesture, and spoke to his men in a dialect new to me.

I seized the opportunity to look for Von Harden. He was not where he had been a moment before. I found he

had forced his way through the mob and was several hundred feet along the trail with the guide.

Then an idea came to me. I had with me the lists of goods in our equipment, and tearing a corner from one of the sheets I scribbled a note to Nechtel asking him to locate a cap like Herr Major's and give it to the chief.

"Give this to the district commissioner and he will get you a much finer hat than the one the white bwana has," I said. "His is only white. Now you will get one of many colors."

That placated him temporarily. After more palaver on both sides I watched the entourage disappear along the trail with much muttering. Then I rode ahead to catch Von Harden.

"You can't get along with the natives that way," I said. "They're children. Within an hour that story will be going out to every village within a hundred miles. You'll be a marked man."

"Nagel," he snapped at me, "you have tried to give me trouble since we started. I warn you I will deal sharply with you unless you tend to your own affairs. I will not be dictated to by a hired guide, white or black. If you pale-livered residents would put these niggers in their places, we wouldn't have the spectacle of one laying his hands on an officer of the German Imperial Army."

"Oh, well . . ." I'd let it pass and forget it.

"Oh, well nothing," he retorted sharply. "You mind your own business. I'm taking the responsibility for this expedition. You remember that?"

He looked at me sullenly, and I saw a large red sore on

the side of his nose, the sting of an insect. It was infected. It might be sleeping sickness. We still were in the tsetse fly belt.

I didn't speak to him for hours after that, nor he to me. We camped, ate, and continued along the road without a word passing between us, though I had plenty to say to the guide, who was too cowed by the latest episode to have any initiative of his own.

Late the following day we forded a branch of the Mono River where in a water hole near by I replenished my water bottle. Some time after I came on an abandoned yam farm where the guide and I ate our fill, but Von Harden continued by himself without stopping.

I foresaw danger in this safari if he continued his tactics. He had to be curbed. If I had thought he would fight me then and there, I think I would have challenged him to a pistol duel. The more I saw of him the more I hated him, and during that last day I particularly hated him because he ate nothing, made no overtures for any of my water though he was badly in need of some, and refused to ask my counsel about the several red welts that were springing up on his face, neck, and hands.

If I wasn't making him suffer, certainly the insects were. He was a sorry spectacle, but I felt he had brought much of it on himself.

At the same time I was forced to admire his iron constitution. He must have been in agony, but if so he made no complaint. I never heard a sound from him. He was an automaton.

The afternoon of the fifth day the guide came back

and said he had seen the tracks of the cart wheels. From a near-by hill he was sure he could see the dust. It might be possible that we could catch them before nightfall.

I sent him off dashing through the bush and fell in well behind Von Harden, who was still riding as erect as when we had first started.

We went on for some distance when suddenly I heard the sound of a shot from around a bend in the road ahead. It was the crack of a Luger and could only be from Von Harden's pistol.

When finally I rounded the turn a curious sight met me. Almost at my feet lay a dead puff adder, one of the most vicious snakes in Africa.

It was squarely in the center of the road, and I was acquainted with its habits well enough to know that when it had been aroused it had refused to budge but wanted to fight. I leaped to the ground and examined it. It was about three feet long and fully grown, capable of giving a lot of trouble.

A jumbled mass of hoofprints near by told me the story. Von Harden's pony had seen it and become frantic. Then, fighting his pony to keep it in the center of the road and himself in the saddle, he had drawn his pistol and fired.

I went back and examined the snake. A large red mass was where its head should have been. A single shot had killed it—a shot so well placed that the snake had died in its tracks. It was the kind of a shot one reads about but never sees—yet here it was.

I envisioned the struggling pony, and the man calmly drawing his pistol and firing.

I looked up the road. Fully half a kilometer ahead rode the white-clad Von Harden, nonchalantly twirling his pistol around an upraised finger. He was still in the middle of the road.

I climbed back on my pony and started slowly after him. As much as I hated him, I had to admire the ability of a man who could sit a plunging pony and hit a snake's head. That he was a crack shot there was no doubt. As I went along I did a lot of thinking, serious thinking.

That night we reached Sokode, five days out on a seven days' trip. As I rode into the compound I heard Von Harden's voice telling a group on the veranda how much he had enjoyed himself. He was still drinking with them and recounting the story of the native chief when I went to bed an hour later exhausted. When I got down in the morning I found a native polishing his military boots.

The white bwana was going for an exercising ride before breakfast. He liked Africa so much he wanted to see more of it.

7

**B**LANKETS, sugar, cots, permanganate, shoelaces, bread, calcium, bullets, needles, toothpowder, books, machetes, shirts, butter packed in salt, eggs in sawdust, pencils, netting, kitchen utensils, gum sneakers, concentrated foods, tents, soap, castor oil, ropes, tinned foods, a little of everything in each porter's sixty pounds—a puzzle without an answer.

For three days I was immersed in the crates, bales, and bags that came up from Atakpame, the job of packing that is impossible yet must be done.

Allotting and sorting, turmoil and confusion, and with each repacking new lists to be drawn up, boxes to be numbered and double checked, and always, always the first rule of a safari—a little of everything in each porter's box. For suppose our precious thirty pounds of quinine were given all to one porter and he should stumble in going over a vine bridge!

On the third day the boxes were standing in a long line in the Sokode compound, and I was solving the equally puzzling question of selecting the porters. There must be head porters, secondary porters, cooks for the foreigners, cooks for the natives, personal servants, gun bearers, messengers, special men to go ahead with me and make

camp, special men to leave behind to break camp that no time should be lost, every man must be capable and every man must have a title of some sort. No one would be a mere carrier.

For another day everything again was turmoil and confusion, the compound was filled with excited, jabbering, and capering blacks, their wives and offspring. To further complicate matters Von Harden had demanded not one servant to care for him, but three. The entire camp wanted to be appointed, to clean those shiny boots. His white coat, his monocle, the jaunty cap: he was the ultimate of desire in sartorial splendor. The blacks could hardly take their eyes off him. Every black aped him.

Finally the job was finished. The boxes stood ready for an early morning get-away, and the porters held an all-night revel to celebrate the leaving, feasting and dancing, shouting and drinking.

Meanwhile Herr Doktor Müller had arrived with the celebrated Rodenbach, the former coming in first, alone and on foot, beaming and whistling and still mopping at his neck, though I was glad to see that his helmet remained on his head. Rodenbach slouched along some distance behind, as disinterested in most things as when I had first met him, taciturn and aloof.

Müller seemed a changed man. Rather than having harmed him, the touch of sun had taught him a lesson.

"I think being sun stricken when you're new to Africa is like having the measles when you're young," he said. "It's something you can't avoid, best to have it and get it over with." He was happy, bubbling with enthusiasm.

I hoped he would remain so, but I doubted it. The real Africa was yet to come.

Rodenbach said scarcely a word to me outside the common civilities. Nor, for that matter, when I considered it, was he saying much to anyone else.

His days were spent mostly in a chair on the veranda, his feet spread out before him, his gangling form slumped down, his head tilted back, and a brief half snore fluttering his scraggly mustache.

When awake he would be moping indifferently around the camp, peering here and there through his thick glasses, and puffing on the usual vile cigar. A look to note the box numbers in which his spare clothing and equipment had been packed, and he took no further interest in the preparations. From his actions he was unconcerned, evidently, whether or not the trip ever got under way. It was difficult to picture him as the great Rodenbach of German Southwest Africa.

As for the great Von Harden, he was proving more of an enigma than ever. I had feared that when we arrived he would visit his temper on the head carter who had taken my suggestion so literally, but he had no such intention. Beyond an amused question as to why the men had raced ahead with such speed, he was not interested. The answer was that they wanted to prove their race the best and fastest trekkers in Africa. There the matter rested.

He treated me civilly enough. We exchanged hardly a word that was not necessary, and so long as he kept to his own sphere, I was content.

At first I was content also with the swollen condition of

his nose and the innumerable red welts on his neck that his own domineering personality had brought him. But on second thought I got a clearer perspective of my treatment of him. And because of those red welts, which must have been giving him pain, though he refused to acknowledge them, I determined to meet him halfway.

So long as he let me alone I would not irritate him.

His desertion of me may have been caused by his telegraph mania, for hardly had the dust of our arrival settled when he began sending messages to Berlin.

But rather I think I was neglected because on the night of his arrival immediately after dinner Rodenbach produced a collapsible checker set which sent Müller into a seventh heaven.

"Fine, fine, now we will have some play. Checkers is the great game."

Here was what we needed. I played a fair game, and Müller quickly arranged a tournament for the four of us that would take weeks to play off. He was in high glee at the prospect.

"Now we can be more friendly with Herr Major," he said *sotto voce*. "This will bring us closer together." Abruptly he stopped himself. "Perhaps," he added.

He sat down on the veranda to play Rodenbach, the winner to play me, and with a cool beer in my hand I began to forget my vague worries.

Müller was not a bad player, but if I thought I would have an easy time, I saw my master in the geologist.

"Been playing this game for twenty years in Africa," he said. "Do you know, Müller, there's a village in the

Kamerun called 'Checkers'? I named it. I taught the natives to play . . . watch out, I'll get in your king row. . . ."

"Ach, Herr Doktor, thank you." A long study of the board, and finally he moved.

"Yes," Rodenbach said, "I named it 'Checkers.' I taught the natives the game, and they took it so seriously they forgot crops and everything."

"Ach," Müller was laughing, "watch this one, Fritz, Fritz," I was listening for Herr Major's step along the hall. Müller sacrificed two men and took three in return.

"What's this, what's this?" Rodenbach was studying the board. He tugged at his mustaches, scratched his head, sucked on his teeth, and, after a moment, moved.

"Yes, sir, Herr Müller," he went on. "The natives down there got so they wouldn't earn their taxes. We had a district commissioner named Von Donnewitz who complained to Berlin." Müller was attempting to watch the board and listen to Rodenbach. Suddenly he made a move. Rodenbach winked at me and went on.

"This fellow actually wrote an official report to Berlin that I had corrupted the natives by teaching them checkers. He was a military man. Funny things these military men do."

"Now, Herr Doktor," Müller broke in, "we are going to have peace. Don't let us have any more personalities. . . ."

"Herr Müller," Rodenbach gave a man, placed another in a vulnerable position, and Müller took the bait.

"I've got to keep talking to you to win, Müller," Rodenbach went on. "I'm a peaceful man, the most peaceful in Africa, but there are times when the best way to have peace is to be always ready to fight."

Rodenbach was playing in the center of the board. "Now, Müller, take this one, and this . . . now this one. . . . Now move."

Müller had but one move remaining, and with it went the game. "Ho, ho," he shouted, "that was excellent. Rodenbach, you play a fine game. Now you must play, Fritz." He arose and exchanged seats with me.

As I was about to sit down Von Harden came on to the veranda.

"Herr Major, Herr Major," Müller spoke up. "Do you play checkers?" Von Harden replied curtly that he did. He was coming toward us when suddenly he stopped.

"But I can't play now," he said. I glanced up and found him looking directly at me. I felt instantly that because of my presence he had turned down the proposal. He turned and went back into the house. "I have some work to do," he said over his shoulder.

Rodenbach started the play, and I responded indifferently. I was more interested in Von Harden.

"Tell me, Herr Doktor Müller," I said. "You know Herr Major. Why did he refuse to play once he saw I was in the game?"

For a moment Müller was nonplussed. "I will explain," he said after a pause. "Something you gentlemen don't know about Herr Major. That is his manner, you mustn't

take exception to it. Do you know that for the last three years he has won the efficiency medal in the army?"

"My, my," Rodenbach retorted, forcing two of my men into an impasse.

"Herr Major's father was General ——" giving a name that was known to every German schoolboy. I looked up in amazement. Rodenbach had paused and was interested. I was about to speak when Müller resumed.

"His grandfather was General —; he faced Napoleon and defeated him. The army has been born in Herr Major's blood for generations. He is all discipline. Since he was a little boy, when he speaks to his father he brings his heels together. You do not know the rigid formality in his family. He is typical of the old Germans, the Junkers. His older brother ranks above him in the army, and do you think he ever forgets it? Not at all. Always his brother comes first. He has a younger brother who is not yet out of cadet school, and do you think they let him sit at the family table with them at home? No. He is not yet an officer, and he sits at a side table. Ach, that family! I know them."

"How do you know them so well?" Rodenbach asked.

"They have a fine estate in the Black Forest, and once a year the old General has the people of the village to a *Saengerbund*. They live like feudal barons."

"And you . . ." I interrupted.

"Certainly," he nodded, "I was brought up in the village. I went to the singing as a young boy. I know his father. That is, I know him when I meet him. I can see the old man riding through the main street in uniform, his

head up, his chest out, and always the people would remove their hats when he passed. He liked that. But would he respond beyond a nod? Not the father. The sons are just like him. Their poor mother tired of it all and went to her grave years ago. They have been brought up by tutors, and always tutors from the army. I knew this fellow when he was a youngster. My boys had a black pony, and he used to steal away from his guards and come down to play with my boys and ride it. But now he is older, and since I have come on this trip he has never mentioned our former acquaintance. He is afraid I would become friendly with him and forget my work." He smiled and shook his head. "Ach, such people, these army officers. Sometimes I think . . . ach, they are so strict."

We had forgotten the checkers. We were interested in Müller.

"But you're a professor now, a distinguished scientist," I broke in. "Certainly you are on a par with him."

"No, no," Müller said, "to everyone else I am, but to him and his family, no. To anyone in the army, no. It is only the army that counts. They have a duty to the Fatherland. . . ."

"Most of them aren't human," Rodenbach interrupted. "Those army fellows with all their formalities will be the ruination of Germany yet. Why do they have all this discipline? So they will always be ready to fight somebody. Isn't that it?" I found myself nodding. "Well, with their fingers always on the trigger the rest of the world will get tired and one day defy them. Then we'll have a catastrophe

on our hands. They'll bring it on us--not the Germans like ourselves who are building the Fatherland by using our brains instead of our fists. I've seen that type before. I had them in the Southwest. If they had their way we'd now be fighting England over the Rhodesias. I know them." He waved his hand deprecatingly. "I know them, and the sooner we rid ourselves of them the better. Army . . . army . . . army . . . that's all they think of."

"Nagel," he suddenly turned to me, "you've been in the army, haven't you?" I nodded. "Sure," he went on, "Von Harden can see it in you. That's why he won't play checkers with you. He's afraid you'll forget yourself and call him Hans, or whatever his name is. They're all alike, that army crowd. I got out of Germany on account of them."

"So did I," I said.

"Well," Miller sighed. "I was in the army as a youth, but it didn't seem to do me much good." He looked down and slapped his fat paunch.

"You should have been in the cavalry," Rodenbach laughed.

He arose, folded up his checkers, and started for the door. "I'm having a smoke and going to bed," he said. "Do you smoke, Nagel?" offering me a cigar.

I thanked him and declined. I entered the house and went up to my room. To reach it I had to go along a hall, and as I approached Von Harden's room I saw that it was lighted and the door open. I looked in as I passed and saw him pacing up and down before a large map fastened

to the wall. Occasionally he would pause and jot something down on paper. I hesitated a moment and looked closer. He was working over a map of France. Suddenly I heard him mutter: "Von Schlieffen's plan is the only one. Belgium's neutrality must not be allowed to stop us. . . ."

**H**ERE again, as at Atakpame, Von Harden got a message from Berlin that sent us out on the trail ahead of our schedule. This time he was in such high spirits on receipt of it that he passed it around to be read as we all sat on the veranda the night after the checker game.

*"The Imperial German Cruiser Panther has arrived in Agadir harbor, Morocco, to protect German residents. Complete your mission as quickly as possible."*

"This will force the issue," he beamed. "'The French will have to fight now or accept the insult. When we fight I must be there. We will be in Paris within three months. Our army is invincible."

"There isn't a German in Agadir, nor a German interest," we suddenly heard Rodenbach's wry voice come out of a wheezing sleep, "not one. I stopped off there last year, and I know the place well. Not a German. What Agadir has, though, is the best harbor on the entire west coast."

Von Harden's laugh could be heard out past the compound.

"True or not," he said, "the impasse had to be brought to a head some way, and this is as good as any. We must

show the world that 1870 was no accident. If Agadir has the best harbor, Bethmann-Hollweg is no fool." Again he roared with laughter.

"You army people," Rodenbach remarked after a moment, "will ruin the Fatherland yet."

I heard Müller shift uneasily and cough, but he said nothing.

"Not at all, Herr Doktor," Von Harden came back. "We will build a Fatherland greater than any yet imagined. In a half century the world will be at our feet. It is the army that will bring it there. First France, then England, and all Europe will be ours. Russia is too weak to be feared."

"Well," dryly, as he shifted his feet and found a new place for his head, "don't you soldiers lose for the Fatherland what the civilians have won."

"Civilians—what have the civilians won?"

Von Harden's high spirits departed in a flash. He turned angrily and I thought challengingly toward Rodenbach, and in the pale moonlight I could see the grim set of his jaws and the contempt in his stolid countenance. It was a moment fraught with drama, and I think we all sensed it.

"What have the civilians won?" he repeated. "It is the army that has done everything for Germany."

I shifted my chair and coughed somewhat uneasily, and Müller nervously put his hand to his face, fumbled a moment, then forced a half laugh that instead of throwing oil on the waters only caused Von Harden to turn and glower at him. Then Herr Major, thrusting out his chest,

walked to the edge of the veranda, opened the screen door, cleared his throat, and spat.

Rodenbach's answer was a drowsy snore that made me splutter and catch at my throat as I suppressed a laugh. Von Harden's contempt for the rest of the world, his supreme egoism, was too much for me. He and he alone was all that mattered in the world.

I looked at him again and saw that he was in a rage at the courtesy of the geologist. For a moment he stood there glaring wide-eyed back at Rodenbach's lanky, inert form slumped in the chair. Then he drew himself up to his full height, flexed his fists, and strode into the house.

Some time later the party broke up. I was glad to get to my cot, and when I came down in the morning Rodenbach was still in the veranda chair.

I have a recollection of a group assembling in the compound: glittering-bodied blacks, drowsy foreigners in whites, the shining boots of Herr Major, a final toast to the Kaiser, a verse of "Die Wacht am Rhein," and we were off, a long, wavering line of porters trekking out of Sokode while a brilliant moon threw down an eerie silvery radiance.

Now came my real work. After a conference with Von Harden I laid out a route following the telegraph line to Bessari, then straight north, making our own trail to Benjeli, Namab, Kumongu, and into Mangu.

Leaving Sokode, we were well in the lesser known areas of northern Togoland, and less than half an hour out our porters discarded their loincloths and went absolutely naked—we were down to life in the bush.

For protection against the mosquitoes they doused their heads with a foul-smelling concoction that under the heat of the sun turned rancid and ran down their bodies, leaving an odor behind that made me thankful I was leading.

Von Harden was on the end where he had taken up a position to watch for trouble in the ranks. There he received the full benefit of the vile odors. One day was enough for him.

The second he came forward and with a glare in my direction asked Rodenbach to take the rear.

"Your cigar can't smell any worse than the niggers," he said.

"Sure," Rodenbach replied, yawning, "now I won't have to keep up with you."

Von Harden halted suddenly and turned back, but Rodenbach was meandering along without a backward glance. Then Von Harden looked again at me. He could not tell whether we were baiting him or not.

We saw many Tschaudjo warriors, perhaps the fiercest fighters in Africa, curbing their diminutive ponies at the side of the trail to let us pass while they looked on in stony indifference. Their villages were like no others in this part of the country, for, being fighters and not agriculturists, they herded together for protection in large clusters of grass-and-mud huts.

Roving tribes of Bafilo folk passed us and were eager to exchange chickens and fresh eggs for salt; a tribe of Kabures watched us from the safety of a distant hill, and as we got up into the Konkombwa country we found evi-

dences for the belief that here was the most advanced tribe in the west.

Its villages were built like Roman forts, with communal corn bins in the center and the dozens of huts protected by a large double wall inside of which the cattle were driven at night. Outside, guinea corn stalks were left standing for protection against the poisoned arrows of enemies. Yam and mealie fields stretched in every direction. At Banjeli we saw their primitive furnaces where iron ore dug out of the mountain by women slaves was smelted and made into arrowheads, farming implements, spears, and knives; and we found their basket-making and native industries developed to a point that surprised us.

But we were not sightseers, nor were we anthropologists, and we spent little time along the trail. We were interested in reaching Mangu in the shortest time possible.

To a layman our safari might not have been uninteresting. The porters were Konombwa men, scarcely any under six feet and one towering to six feet five inches, for I measured him. He was the tallest native I had ever seen, and I was not surprised when Von Harden selected him for his gun bearer. Crossing streams he was equally useful in toting Von Harden and keeping those precious boots dry, boots that now were beginning to bake out, crack, and give evidence of the sun's penetrating power. Cracked or not, the boots seemed to Herr Major the alpha and omega of his existence. He scorned our gum sneakers.

The porters' arms up past the elbows were hidden by long rows of glittering brass bracelets, their ankles were similarly encased, their hair was entwined with cowrie

shells and hammered brass ornaments, and with a long, wavering row of ninety black, shining bodies slithering through the bush, we made a fascinating picture. Now that we actually were under way, the only accoutrement each native wore was his precious bag of fetishes around his neck.

Behind me was the head man keeping up a chant to which the followers kept time, and usually off to one side strutted our personal servants, who did not want even the hyenas to suspect them of being carriers.

The country was rough and uneven, we were in a long range of small hills, the days became hotter and the nights colder, fast travel was exhausting, yet we kept on.

Noontimes we rested—wisely enough Von Harden was being considerate—but early mornings and late afternoons found us plunging ahead. River fordings were a godsend, for after the fetish man had waded in and charmed whatever crocodiles might be near, we used the few minutes of crossing to enjoy a bath. All save Von Harden, who would look back disdainfully at us from the majestic height of his porter's head.

Mangu I remember chiefly because we changed carriers again, which meant more confusion, more turmoil in choosing our personal servants. They were another crowd of Konkombwas, specially picked men, and I was glad to see that as we went out of the station each man was now wearing over his shoulder his sheaf of arrows and a bow. We were getting up into the territory where German law was unknown; the gun and the poisoned arrow ruled. I was happy, and I think Müller and Rodenbach were also, for

the sooner we got into the territory we sought, the sooner we would make permanent camps and they could get to work.

As for Von Harden, we paid little attention to him. Unless it was to wonder at his persistence in wearing his military uniform and sweltering under a high collar. Yet he would not give himself relief. I laid it to stubbornness. Müller said it was the result of his lifelong military training. He was inflexible; he never bent.

We had only eighty carriers now, the boxes were shaken down, and when we left Mangu the resident commissioner came along with us to the edge of the French frontier.

This land above Mangu was the hunter's paradise. We stirred up large flocks of guinea fowl, ducks, teal, and though Herr Major did augment our diet by aid of his shotgun, the elephants, rhinos, and an occasional lion we might have bagged went unmolested. The fine Mauser went unused. We were big-game hunters, yet we shot no big game.

Most nights we camped out in the open with a circle of fires guarding us from the prowling eyes that seemed everywhere about. Noondays we would find shelter, usually under a baobab tree, and while we slept the porters would stone down bats to make themselves a vile-smelling stew that I long since had tried and found wanting.

The country was wilder with every kilometer. Villages were fewer, and though we avoided many, those through which we passed were noteworthy for the way in which they had been built. Each was a fort in itself, each held the communal corn bins, the large storages of yams and other

foodstuffs, huge vats of water, and each night the cows, fowls, and pigs would be driven in to sleep with their owners. They, in turn, slept on their poisoned arrows, for in this country raiding parties from Dahomey, the Upper Volta, and even Ashanti, were a commonplace. Nor did the natives forego a frequent raiding party on their own.

Each day seemed hotter than the one before. We were crossing a chain of rolling hills, but the sun still bore down with unrelenting fury. To add to our troubles, the natives were burning over their fields. The result was that for long hours we could not escape a wind-blown, sultry smoke that crowded our lungs and sent us into violent coughings. At times the sun was almost blotted out, but we kept on.

I was not unhappy when the day came that the commissioner halted on the broad bank of the Oti and pointed across:

"Here is the Rubicon," he said. "The opposite bank is under the French flag."

I gave close attention to the others as they came up.

Müller was using his hammock more frequently, but he appeared to be in good condition. He was just as fat, but it seemed a hard, muscle fat now, and like all of us he was tanned as deep a brown as the earth over which we trudged. He was still sweating and mopping, but he took his discomfort with a laugh.

Rodenbach was as indifferent as ever. He had walked most of the way, and as one might have expected, no sooner would we strike a camping place than his wheezing snore would be well started by the time the last of the carriers came up. He still smoked, peered through his thick

glasses, and his lounging, untidy form was as stooped as ever. I don't think he spoke one hundred words to anybody from Mangu to the frontier.

When Herr Major came up I thought he greeted the news with more enthusiasm than he had shown heretofore.

"Ah," he said, "now we can start the real expedition. Now I can put my plans into action."

He was all hard muscle. There wasn't a lazy bone in him, and I was happy to look back and realize that since Mangu he had been much more human, though he had pushed us. He let me run my end of the trip, and beyond laying out a course with him at the first crack of dawn, we had little contact. Henceforth I hoped I would have no cause for complaint.

Perhaps, also, much of my trouble with him was imaginary. I wondered—but not for long.

I QUICKLY discovered that my hopes for amity were premature. With our entry into French territory Von Harden took on a new lease of life. He was no longer the agreeable member of the party he had been since Mangu. It was the old Von Harden coming back again, stronger than ever, and as I saw the emergence I took a hitch in my belt and decided that the game was not yet done.

During the first noonday stop he approached me.

"I stood off at one side this morning," he said, "and watched this crowd pass—it might have been an army battalion. But no, a battalion wouldn't make so much dust and noise."

He was looking at the porters, and I had occasion again to notice his high, tight military collar over which the flesh at the back of his neck bulged and accentuated his closely cropped bullet head.

"So, beginning this afternoon, we will stop all singing in the ranks. These damned niggers are crazy. They will march four abreast from now on."

"They won't stand for it," I spoke up.

He removed his eyepiece, polished it carefully, then screwed it back into his eye, tapped his boot with his riding crop, and after a sufficient interval, spoke again.

"They will stand for anything—if a man is behind them with a rifle."

So this was his idea. The Belgian Congo methods all over again. But now I was getting wiser. If he wanted war, I had determined to let him beat himself. I would offer only feeble opposition.

"Do you think so? I don't. They never heard of a safari marching four abreast, they couldn't go on without singing, and if you think the presence of a rifle will cow these Konkombwas, you're wrong. They've been the last tribe to bend to German rule, they——"

"Ye—s! Nagel, I'm not asking your advice, I'm ordering you. Four abreast and no singing."

"Very good. But you try the rifle idea and you'll get a poisoned arrow before you can get your rifle to your shoulder."

"Ye—s!"

"Ye—s!"

"Well, Nagel, so long as the arrows are from the front, I'll take my chances with all that come." He looked at me with a half sneer. "All of them," he repeated.

As we were preparing to start, he beckoned to me. He was standing at the head of the procession.

"Tell them," he said, "that I want them to march four abreast. I'll form them, and they are to keep the formation. And tell them nothing else," he added. I was forced to smile. So he suspected the flight up from Atakpame was my doing.

"Very good, Herr Major."

I clicked my heels and walked away. Now we'd see some

excitement. I vowed I would not interfere, though I couldn't keep the insolence out of my voice. The man was infuriating me again. I was getting to the place where I couldn't be in his presence without bristling. Why couldn't he let me run the job I had been hired for?

I told Soko, my headman, what the bwana had in mind, and he replied that the porters would rebel. They had never marched four abreast, they could understand nothing but the usual single file. And as for the singing, they wouldn't scare big game away.

Of course Soko could understand; he was the only black man with the brains of a white. That was why he was a headman. The others were little better than pack horses. As for himself, he saw the wisdom—

"All right," I cut him short. I had heard the same procedure before on a dozen safaris, the African black never changes. "I know what a great man you are. You just tell the others. Tell them to do exactly as the bwana says."

He walked away shaking his head and called the sub-headmen to him. A moment later the camp was in a turmoil. A palaver was on. They shouted at the tops of their voices. They screamed, waved their arms, stamped their feet, groaned, beat their breasts, and one went so far as to throw himself on the ground and roll over and over.

Meanwhile Von Harden had been standing to one side, watching. A smile was playing about the corners of his mouth, his riding crop was beating the familiar barrage against a brightly polished boot. I was beginning to wish he and his precious boots were in hell. After the episode of the chief, and now this latest affair, I had my doubts

that the trip would turn out the peaceful affair I had determined to make it.

Müller and Rodenbach were nowhere to be seen. They had gone off to a near-by stream to wash.

Finally Von Harden tired of the blacks' exhibition. Without a word he went to a chop box and extracted a pistol and belt which he strapped around his waist. I looked at him incredulously. I had a sickening fear of what was coming.

"Now, Nagel, you tell the niggers the sooner they obey orders the better for them. Understand? Tell them just that."

"Very good, Herr Major."

For a moment the porters looked at him through uncomprehending eyes. They had never seen a white man make such threatening gestures. It was strange but it was real. They looked again. He was drawing on a cigarette while one hand rested on his pistol butt. There was not a glimmer of play-acting in his make-up. They sensed that he would not shy from going through with what he had started.

He took the four men nearest him and with much shoving and prodding herded them into place. Then four more behind, and so on, with much confusion, until he had the entire party lined up. There was no sign of antagonism, only mutters and frightened looks at his pistol. He turned toward me with a smile to show the ease with which he had done it. "See, it is easy, once you show who is boss," his gestures said.

But if I knew the African psychology the episode would have a repercussion. The blacks have long memories when they want to exert them. And I would have wagered anything that the play was not done. Herr Major was fondling dynamite. The last thing a foreigner in Africa should do is to menace a native with a pistol. It showed that Von Harden was weak. But here again I had tried to point out his tactical error and had been rebuffed. Now he would learn for himself.

"Nagel," he shouted to me, "you tell them to pick up their boxes and retain these positions. They are to march in exactly this order." I hesitated a moment. I was wondering how I could in some small measure smooth it over. "Go on," he suddenly snapped, "go on, tell them."

That decided me. I'd tell them and let him take the consequences.

"Very good, Herr Major."

I turned to Soko, when we were interrupted by a voice behind us coming from the direction of the stream.

"What kind of foolishness is this?" It was in English, and I looked around, surprised. It was Rodenbach. He was standing in the trail, his arms akimbo, his lanky form stooping over, and his small eyes peering at the display through his thick glasses. Müller stood behind him, a look of blank astonishment on his rubicund face.

"What the hell is it?" Rodenbach repeated.

"Herr Major is going to march them like this," I said, interested in the new turn of events.

"Well, for God's sake, this is absolutely the silliest thing

I have seen in twenty-four years in Africa." His head was shaking slowly back and forth. Then he turned his squinting eyes on Von Harden.

"Yes," Herr Major broke in challengingly, "they're going to march just like this. Any comments?"

"No, no," Rodenbach went on slowly with overemphasis, "no, I haven't any comments."

"No, no," I heard Müller break in apologetically. He was forcing a smile and hastily stepped forward. "I think it's a good idea. Yes, of course, ha, ha, ha," he laughed, but nobody joined him.

Instead of thanking him for his support, Von Harden glared at the botanist, whose smile disappeared as he edged nervously behind Rodenbach. It was such a typical gesture of Müller the peacemaker that I think it angered us rather than helped. I didn't want him to interfere. Something was coming between Von Harden and Rodenbach, and I didn't want to see it halted.

"They're going to march like this because in single file they create too much dust," Von Harden said. "Furthermore, it took us fifteen minutes today to pass a given point. We can't get anywhere that way. Everybody in the district will know we're here."

"Everybody will know it anyhow," Rodenbach said. "An expedition like this can't be kept secret. A native tracker crossing our trail ten miles back can tell how many have passed."

"These niggers make more dust than a battalion," Von Harden interrupted him. "I've marched in maneuvers with—"

"Not in Africa," Rodenbach broke in half angrily. "You're always talking army. You can't bring army methods out here."

"If we had more army methods out here and fewer insipid, mollycoddling civilians, Togoland would be the better for it."

"You fool with them, then. But when you get a spear through you, don't come to me. And get rid of that pistol —you'll turn them all against you. No one out here would think of threatening natives like that."

"Oh, gentlemen, gentlemen." It was Müller. "Think first of our duty to the Fatherland. Let personalities stay out of this trip. We have a great duty. Please, please." He was waddling from one to the other, wringing his hands, and I thought any moment he might burst into tears. "Please, gentlemen, please,"—penitent and apologetic, that was Müller. But they kept on.

Rodenbach was declaring himself, and though I said nothing but was content to wait out Von Harden bringing trouble upon himself, I could not help but feel that now my attitude toward him was vindicated. He was a fool, he was arrogant, and it was not all my imaginings.

Meanwhile the porters had deserted their ranks with a palaver equal in intensity to Von Harden and Rodenbach, and before either of the principals noticed them they were again lying in the shade of the tree under which we had halted.

Neither side would give in, and yet, eventually, they reached a stalemate. How it came about I do not know, for I was sitting on a rock thinking what a hell of a way this

was for a safari to proceed. Again they resumed, and again I went back to my doubts over the success of the trip, when suddenly I sat up like a shot. The means of my rousing came like a thunderclap. I heard Von Harden:

"... send you back."

That touched off the fireworks. I saw the bent-over form of Rodenbach stiffen to his full height; in one giant stride he crossed the space separating them, and he bent over Herr Major's jauntily tilted cap, his finger shaking in the arrogant face.

"You'll send me back! You'll send Rodenbach back, eh! *Ach, mein Gott!*" Suddenly he went off into French, and I saw his face was livid. I thought he would seize Von Harden by the throat. His fingers were flexing, his long arms hanging limply, gorilla-like. His breath came in short jerks.

"You little whippersnapper, you bantam rooster, you upstart, if I could get on a wire to Berlin I'd have you packing back to your precious army before the sun went down, your boots, your monocle, your whole bumptious make-up."

He stepped back; he was so angered he couldn't speak. Then suddenly he leaped forward again and thrust his finger out until he almost struck Von Harden on the nose.

"You'll send me back! You should be glad I'm letting you stay here, you and your army discipline. You talk to Nagel the way you want, but don't try your jingoism on me or I'll break you in two here and in Berlin. Now you think it over and do your damnedest."

He turned and walked away, and as he did Von Harden,

with a familiar gesture, loudly cleared his throat and spat. I thought at that moment that Von Harden had been quelled, but I was wrong. He came over to me smiling and pert as ever.

"Nagel, can you blow a bugle?"

"A bugle . . . what . . . a bugle? I don't know." The question took me off my feet, I couldn't understand what he was talking about.

"A bugle, *dummkopf*." In a flash his smile vanished, he was sneering. "Don't you know what a bugle is?"

So he was taking it out on me, was he? Rodenbach had beaten him, and he was venting his spite on me. Well, I'd show him. My resolutions vanished in a flash. I went to work with an eagerness that surprised me.

I jumped to my feet, unbuckled my pistol belt and threw it on the ground, my helmet and net following. Then I started taking off my shirt. Since the trip started I had saved it up. Now he was going to get it.

"No, I can't blow a bugle, but I'm going to smash your——"

Müller thrust his fat little body between us.

"No, Fritz, no, Fritz, don't let us have any trouble. This is awful. Think first of our duty to the Fatherland. Oh, this is awful!" He was wringing his hands and pleading while the tears ran down his cheeks. Now he was crying.

Von Harden wasn't feazed. He paid not the slightest attention to my threats. Instead he was smiling and puffed up as ever.

"Then I ought to have a whistle," he said. "It's the only way to keep these people in order."

"Why don't you get a horse and a sword?" I shot back.  
"Maybe you're Napoleon," as I attempted to butt Müller's fat stomach out of the way.

Von Harden broke into a laugh. "Maybe I am," he said. "I'm Napoleon for this expedition, anyway, and you're a head porter, remember that." His face was smiling, but I could see the redness in the roll of flesh that hung over the top of his tight military collar; sweat was running down from his closely cropped head.

"Don't let Rodenbach make you the goat," he said. "He is the geologist on this trip, but remember your place."

Somehow that sneering smile of his took the belligerency out of me. Slowly I let Müller push me back. I was buttoning up my shirt when Von Harden spoke again.

"Don't act like a child," he said, "and when I speak to you civilly I expect a civil answer. Remember, we can get a head porter any time."

"Can you!" I answered. "Try it." I had control of myself now. I had been a fool to let go. I'd wait him out. The jungle would beat him, and I'd stand by watching.

"If you want to stay on this safari you'll be civil to me and remember your place. Do you want to stay?"

I reached down for my belt and smiled—my place. So he wouldn't fight a menial. Perhaps one day he'd have to.

"Do you," he shot back, "do you?"

"Yes," I answered. "Certainly I want to stay. I want to see the jungle get you." He turned away, ignoring me.

"Then form these niggers again. We're going on in proper marching order."

I was so angry that I did exactly what he said. I wanted to ask what would happen when we got out of the open country where walking even two abreast would be impossible, but I said nothing. I wanted him to cook his own goose.

I called Soko. He told me the men were all on my side, yet they would do what the bwana said. With much muttering they picked up their chop boxes and soon were standing as quietly as natives can ever stand.

"Forward," Von Harden suddenly shouted. I looked at him and distinctly saw him raise his right leg in the goose step. He was a man past my comprehension. Nothing daunted him. There was something superb about him, as much as I hated him.

"March!" he shouted.

I glanced to the rear and saw Müller coming along. He was half stumbling, half running, mopping at his neck. His face seemed to have aged years with the incidents of the afternoon, and as he drew nearer I saw that he had lost all the enthusiasm he had regained at Sokode. I did not like his looks. Instead of going forward he should have been heading for Mangu. We would have trouble with him.

As he passed me he said, "Please, Herr Nagel, don't have any more arguments with him. You don't know how all this will end. Oh, please do what he says. It is only for a short time."

Poor Müller, had he but known.

Again I looked to the rear and saw Rodenbach coming up in his hammock. As he passed I stepped forward to speak to him when I heard a familiar noise. He was snoring.

Then I ran forward to the head of the procession, picking up Soko and my gun bearer on the way and drawing out my field glass.

The men behind me were coming along four abreast.

"Bwana," Soko said, "the men won't keep this up. They think the white master is bewitched."

"So do I," I answered. "We'll soon know. Come on. Go to the right of that hill away up ahead. I think I see a narrow pass there."

But the narrow pass was more my wish than my discovery. When we got to the base of the hill the country stretched before us, wide and open.

Von Harden had won. The tramp—tramp—tramp continued behind me.

**T**HE following day we struck a wide trail and were continuing along it when suddenly a native appeared ahead of us, took a frightened look at our massed formation, and melted into the bush. Soko said it was to be expected.

A kilometer farther on the man appeared again accompanied by three others, who looked on incredulously for some moments before coming forward. They told us there was a village ahead and we would be welcome. They were Barbas, a lazy, dirty people.

We exchanged preliminary salutations. We would be glad to visit the chief, of whom we had heard much, of his munificence, the beauty and great number of his wives, and his great wisdom. With that story going ahead of us I felt we could not go wrong. I knew African chiefs. Meanwhile we had news of good hunting prospects for him. Only that morning we had passed a large herd of wildebeests grazing in an open plain. They weren't half a meal away.

We gave each of our guests a cup of salt, and they were gone. Soon they returned. The chief was preparing to welcome us. More salt and more dashing away ahead of us again. This was part of the usual ceremony and would continue until we arrived at the village.

Eventually we rounded a turn, and it stood before us.

The huts were the usual mud-and-thatch hovels, the people grimy and shiftless, cattle and fowl everywhere underfoot.

A crowd of children and women came out to meet us and whooped and yelled as we came in. A dance was immediately organized to bid us welcome, and while the drums thundered and rolled we stood and waited, glad when it was finished. Under a tree in the center of the settlement the chief had set out his gifts for us-- several calabashes of milk, fowls, eggs, and the side of a freshly killed pig.

On behalf of the white men I accepted and voiced my appreciation in a neat speech which had to do with the king's munificence, the beauty and great number of his wives, and his great wisdom. In reply he told me that not in all Africa was there another chief so good to his people. He was modest about the number and beauty of his wives, but he was sure that whatever I had heard had been underestimated, and he agreed with me that he was exceeding wise.

I presented him with ten pounds of salt, several small hunting knives in leather holsters, and a pair of old gaiters that in some way had been packed with my equipment. Rodenbach gave him a mirror, and Müller located an unnecessary magnifying glass which pleased him highly. Von Harden gave him nothing, nor did he give any encouragement to me save that we were to be ready to resume the trek in a half hour. He would have no part in the foolishness, and lest we should have another incident of a native laying his hands on an officer of the German

Army, he went ahead with Soko and waited for us on the outskirts of the village.

Meanwhile our porters hailed the opportunity to get down to some serious gambling. Each had an accumulation of wealth—we followed the usual custom and paid them off each night, a cup of salt apiece—and soon a form of dice was under way.

These men would strain and perspire for hours for a cup of salt and lose it on one toss of the cowrie shells. It was second nature to them to gamble, not so much that they might win and retire, for the game seldom ended until one man had won everything, but because they liked the thrill of chance taking. I have seen hundreds of them come home from long safaris with nothing more to show for their absence than a new song to sing or a new wound to exhibit.

Our men were no exceptions. By the time the last had come in a dozen games were under way, each participant shouting and dancing. Those who weren't playing might be bartering about for tidbits, a few would snatch a moment's sleep, and still others would find diversions in certain huts at the edge of the village. The stop might be for a brief half hour, but they were content. They knew how to concentrate their pleasures into small doses. They were children, happy and care-free, content so long as they were amused. Today was today, and tomorrow might never come.

Rodenbach and Müller spent their time with me and the chief, who insisted upon extending to us the lesser amenities of his harem—African style. He was presenting

each of his nineteen wives to us and recounting in detail their individual idiosyncrasies in matters marital. At the moment only five were pregnant, and he hoped we would not consider this a reflection on his virility.

He was fat, middle-aged, and inclined to violent and strange noises.

As we were leaving, he explained that his munificence was more than a matter of conversation. Should we wish, there were activities open to us that would put us in better condition for the trail ahead. Not in the royal abode, of course, nor among the commonplace of the village. There was a certain class, hard to define, neophytes, perhaps, for the royal harem, where we would be welcomed. His philosophy was all work and no play, etc. . . .

I was trying to plan an adroit refusal when I heard Rodenbach:

"Come on, Müller, here's our chance." Then he turned to the chief and spoke in Eewee: "My friend thanks you. He wants a young, fat one."

The chief beamed. "The fattest one he shall have," he answered.

I looked at Müller and found him the picture of distress. He had sensed Rodenbach's conversation. Nor did the chief's wide grin and look of approval escape him.

"But, no, Herr Doktor," he said, "ach, no." He tried to laugh it off, but Rodenbach was adamant. He took the rotund little botanist by the arm and returned to the hut, where the chief was already shouting at the inmates.

"This is what you need, Müller. Better than all the medicine . . ."

"No, Herr Doktor." He was seriously frightened now. "I have a family . . . ah, Herr Doktor . . ." as Rodenbach continued pulling him forward. "Ach, please, no, no, no. . ." His eyes were staring, he looked pleadingly at me, but I had too much trouble hiding my amusement to be of assistance.

Meanwhile the chief had returned to the door of the hut, his arm around the waist of a badly scared young girl whose girth was so prodigious as to dwarf Müller's.

"Tell him here is my treasure," the chief said to Rodenbach.

"This girl only likes fat men," Rodenbach translated. "She saw you when we first came and asked the chief to bring you back. Come on, Müller, you can't refuse a chief." Again he seized him by the arm and started pulling him forward when Müller's protests became violent. He struck at Rodenbach, his face livid. "No, no, no," he kept shouting. "I have a family in Hamburg, no, no, think of my family. . . ."

Finally he wriggled out of the geologist's grasp, and the last we saw of him he was disappearing around the corner of a hut faster than I ever thought he could move.

Rodenbach was convulsed with laughter, the chief looked on wonderingly, and I was nonplussed as to how we could withdraw without hurting the royal pride.

Rodenbach wasn't worried at all. He was holding his sides and laughing. It seemed he was no respecter of dignity.

Meanwhile I had been thanking the chief, who was looking at us askance. The girl, thankful for her deliverance,

had disappeared into the hut. Suddenly I realized that the best way to handle the situation was by a prompt withdrawal, and taking Rodenbach by the arm I again stammered my thanks for the chief's offer of hospitality and retired in some confusion.

When we left the royal presence I saw the chief standing in the doorway with the nineteen gathered around him, sadly shaking his head after us. We were beyond his understanding.

We found Von Harden and Müller at the far end of the village, and as we came up there was a twinkle in Von Harden's eye. Evidently Müller had been telling his troubles, but Herr Major wisely enough did not bring the matter up. Immediately on seeing us he was all efficiency.

His half smile vanished in a flash. "There is a village about twenty kilometers ahead according to my maps," he said to me. "Avoid it. We will be talked about. Form the men, quick now."

There were more confusion, more menacing gestures and black eyes flashing at Von Harden, but he was oblivious of them.

"Northeast, northeast, Nagel. Look for a river."

I ran ahead of the party with Soko and my gun bearer at my heels.

Behind I heard the familiar guttural voice: "Foorwarddd... march!"

Sometime that afternoon we got off the trail and continued overland toward a chain of rolling hills, dim and shimmering under the sweltering sun. The ground around us was uneven, filled with bushes and low, stunted trees,

and, occasionally, broad open spaces. Before I knew it the men had reverted to single file, and as Von Harden had replaced me up ahead on the lookout for a camping place, I let them remain so.

On and on and on we went, winding and twisting along a dry river bed that was parched and scaring to the touch. I wondered about Herr Major in his light-fitting white coat and high military boots. We were broiling in the loosest of coverings, but he might have been on parade. There was no let-down in his rigid military discipline, either for us or for himself. Never did he change character, never did he relax. He was inexorable. He was the typical iron-willed German Army officer.

Suddenly my gun bearer called my attention to several brown patches on the ground under a withered cottonwood tree. They were sleeping lions. As we came closer one got our wind and stood up, gazing drowsily at us.

"No," I shook my head. "By and by we'll shoot."

The native looked curiously at me, and I heard him passing the word along that there were lions on the left but I had refused to shoot them. The day before Von Harden had watched a buffalo fighting a leopard and had similarly refused to use his gun. This episode of mine started an argument in the ranks that continued for several kilometers. What kind of big-game hunters were we that we refused to shoot?

I knew what was agitating the blacks. It was customary on safaris to reward the men over and above their contract agreement in the event of bringing back a full bag, and here were opportunities we were letting go by. They were

losing out on their expected bonuses. Most hunters would have been pleased at the prospects we refused. The blacks could not understand us. Hunters and not hunting.

And as for their suspicions, I was visioning again that scene in Sokode when Von Harden had revealed the purpose of the trip to me and I had asked an all-important question, to be curtly squelched. I wondered now if the porters were asking themselves the same question. Perhaps our lives would depend upon the answer Herr Major had refused to make.

We were virtual spies in enemy territory. We were hunters, yet we weren't hunting—the blacks jabbered ominously among themselves. What kind of a trip were they on?

We camped that night around the base of a small hill which Von Harden had selected. He was to be on the summit, we whites on a plane lower down, and the blacks in a full circle below us. It made me think of a feudal baron's estate along the Rhine.

As we came up and found Von Harden awaiting us, I noticed he looked carefully at the men, a scowl coming over his features. He lost no time.

"Nagel, come here." He sauntered away from the others up to his tent on top of the knoll, and I felt like a small boy in school about to be caned. Obediently I followed.

A sufficient distance and suddenly he turned upon me. "These men were not marching the way I had formed them."

"True, the ground——!"

"I am not interested in excuses. When I give an order

I expect you to carry it out. Every day you are disobeying me. As a consequence of your latest dereliction I am forced to make a note to Herr von Krocke to fine you when you are paid at the conclusion of the trip. If we were not so far along, I would have no hesitancy in sending you back. Another misstep on your part and I will. That is all."

I wanted to laugh in his face. I could not imagine Von Krocke fining me once I explained our Potsdam general's latest innovation. Instead, I thought he might reward me for not walking out on Von Harden when he had interfered with my department and demanded that the men march four abreast. The porters were my charges, he had repeatedly reminded me. But I said nothing. I took his dressing-down in what I considered the proper penitent spirit. I was learning. Passive submission, I think my demeanor has since been called.

Coming down from his hill, I noticed the ground crumbled under my foot. I looked at it. It seemed firm enough, but I stamped with my heel and it yielded. That was interesting. I walked around to the far side and stamped again. The same result. I scraped the earth away and found it honeycombed. There was but one meaning.

I looked up suddenly and found Von Harden standing over me. His precious riding boots were in his hand, and beside him was Soko, to whom he was giving instructions for their cleaning.

Soko had been watching me closely. He had seen what caused me to smile.

Suddenly he spoke, not to me but to Von Harden. He forgot that Von Harden couldn't understand Eewee.

"Nagel," Von Harden said to me, "you tell this nigger not to speak to me. If he has something to say, he should tell it to you and you bring it to me in the proper way." He turned away from us and walked into his tent.

Soko looked after him in surprise.

"Why does he walk away?" he asked.

"Because you shouldn't speak to him. He is the great white bwana, and if you have something to say, he says you should say it to me first."

"Bah!" Soko waved his arms and shouted, bringing several of his headmen on the run. "I am not a porter. I am a headman."

"Yes, but he is the great white bwana."

"Is he the greatest white bwana?"

"He thinks so."

"Bah! . . ."

He went away muttering and grumbling with his aides.

I went immediately to find Rodenbach. "I'm not sleeping in my tent tonight," I said. "My men are rigging my hammock on the tent poles."

"Why?"

I told him of the ground crumbling as I came down from Von Harden's tent and of Soko's attempt to warn him. If I had any doubts of his failing me he quickly dissipated them.

"It will serve him right," he said. "Don't spoil it by saying anything. I'll handle Müller. We'll all sleep in hammocks." He went away chuckling, in search of the botanist.

Two hours later, as I made my last round of the camp,

I saw them swaying gently in their hammocks. Above me Von Harden's tent stood out, a dull mass against a star-filled sky. Below me a chain of fires circled the hill. The natives were grumbling. I listened a moment and caught snatches of "hunters" and "no shoot, no shoot." The day before we had gone out of our way to avoid a large village, and they got no opportunity for gambling. Never before had they gone on such a safari. They were worried.

An hour or so before dawn a terrific din on the hill awakened me. It was Von Harden. I looked up quickly and saw him rush out of his tent waving his arms and yelling. I reached over to Rodenbach. He was already awake, and as I stepped to the ground I saw the fat little body of Müller shoot up suddenly to a sitting position.

"What is it?" he said. "What is it? Oh, Fritz! Are we attacked? Oh! oh! oh!"

"Shut up," Rodenbach snapped at him. He turned to me. "Here it comes," he said, *sotto voce*. "This is the best part of the trip."

Von Harden was charging down the hill. Already the blacks were stirring around the dying fires.

"Nagel, Nagel, Rodenbach, get those god-damned niggers up." Then he went off into French and ended with a touch of low Spanish.

He was rubbing his arms and body, dancing up and down, and I saw that he had been wearing pajamas which now were strung out in shreds behind him.

"Nagel, Rodenbach, Müller, God damn it! God damn it!"

"Well, what is it?" I asked finally.

"Oh!" He saw me and came toward my hammock. "Dummkopf, cochon, why did you let me sleep in that tent? Why? Answer me, why?" He was like a madman, slapping at his body and writhing, half naked.

"Fritz, Fritz." It was Müller. He was near tears. "What has happened? Oh, Fritz!"

"What's the matter with you?" I asked Von Harden.

"Matter!" he exploded. "Matter enough! That tent is full of ants, I'm full of ants, my nose, my ears, between my toes, everywhere—ants...."

Rodenbach made a noise that might have been a sneeze, though I thought it wasn't. I was having a hard enough time trying to keep my composure.

"The ants were in the hill under you. Soko tried to tell you about it, and you wouldn't listen."

"What's that you say?" He looked at me, but the slapping did not stop.

"Soko tried to tell you, but you wouldn't listen."

"No matter!" He was off again, shouting uproariously. "Get some men up there to take my equipment out. Everything is filled with ants." He went off into a frenzy of cursing.

"Say," suddenly shouted Rodenbach, "must you wake us up? Why don't you go away and let us sleep? We haven't any ants. Have we? Müller, Müller," at the top of his voice, "oh, Müller, have you any ants?"

Müller was not in the same mood. Again he was panicky. "Please, gentlemen, don't be that way with each other. We must have harmony. How can we succeed . . . Please! Please!"

"No, Müller hasn't any ants," Rodenbach shouted out. "Now go away and let me sleep." He turned his back on Herr Major, rolled over, pulled the blankets up about him, and sighed.

I went up to Von Harden's tent. Now I was reaping the reward. I was happy to have been awoken.

I pulled up the tent stakes and hauled the canvas down the far sides of the hill. Then I went back and found Von Harden rooting about in the confusion while a servant held a blazing torch. Others were carrying away equipment. Everyone was chattering and yelling, down below the main encampment of blacks was a pandemonium. Everyone was excited save Rodenbach and myself. I looked back, and there, swaying in the slight breeze, was the elongated hammock of the geologist. He hadn't bothered to get up. I suspected he was already snoring. Müller was somewhere in the mass of people around me.

Suddenly above the din I heard Von Harden's voice, louder than before. This time it was German that was not learned in a military school.

"Look," he was bellowing, "look what they did. Get me some oil. Get me some oil. Burn the hill down. Burn it down." He was screaming. "Look, *dummkopf*," he shouted when I reached him. "Look at this! Look what you did!"

He was holding his riding boots. They didn't seem natural. I looked closer. Then I saw what had happened.

Each boot was in two pieces. The ants had eaten the linen thread holding the sole as easily as though it had been silk. The leather they had not touched. Von Harden was standing there, swearing with the full power of his

jungs, the tops of the boots in one hand and the soles in the other. They were useless. There was nothing we could do on the trail. The precious boots were beyond repair.

I pushed my way through the crowd and sought my hammock. As I was about to climb up into it I looked back and in toward the top of the hill. At the same moment the light of a torch reflected Von Harden's monocle.

"Too damned bad they couldn't eat that, too," I said, between laughs. I rolled in my blankets, happy that his education was beginning. He was still swearing when I dropped off to sleep.

MORE days of sweltering heat. Overhead the sun glared out of an endless blue; underfoot was a shriveled and dead earth that grew increasingly hot as the sun rose and made changes of clothes necessary. Around us were fewer of the seared, stunted bushes than we had seen heretofore. It was a gaunt and withered country, bereft of living things. The sun had subdued all life.

Those were days of constant tramping. The noon rest was cut to a minimum. We kept to the trail, anxious to find the succor that must be ahead. When we made camp at the end of the day we were too exhausted to resurrect the checkers. The tournament was forgotten. Once our evening meal had been bolted, we wearily sought our hammocks, thankful for a moment's respite from the inescapable shimmer that lived in our brains long after the sun had gone down. The darkness of night and the cold that made us glad of our blankets were a godsend, brief though the rest might seem.

We tried to crowd every waking moment into an advance along the trail. We started in the half light of morning, our teeth chattering. Our bodies were swathed in blankets, but within an hour we were glad to discard them. For though the sun hadn't yet appeared its presence was felt.

Rodenbach, Müller, and I lunged on clad only in loose-fitting coats and trousers with gum sneakers and a helmet completing our attire. But Herr Major was not in our class. He was ever the militarist in uniform.

Despite the discomfort, he was resplendent in white slacks with blue piping down the legs. I discovered that he had several identical white coats and an abundant supply of white tops for his cap. Not to be restrained by the loss of his boots, he had refused my proffer of gum sneakers and produced a pair of alpine walking shoes. What tortures his feet must have gone through I could never ascertain, for there was no letting down in his frigid reserve. He would never be a party to the closer companionship that Müller had hoped for. And as in everything else into which he had blundered, we heard no further reference to his rout by the ants. It was a closed chapter.

He was stepping out more confident and less tired than any of us. It came to me that the more adverse the country through which we marched, or the more unfortunate the calamities that befell him, the more was he growing in stature. His step was sure and energetic, he was sunburned a deep tan, he carried not an ounce of superfluous flesh, and I knew he was in the pink of physical condition. Adversity seemed the milk upon which he fed. He was made of iron.

The monocle was ever present, the neck bulging above his collar, the form-fitting coat (I once suspected he wore corsets), and the cap at the usual jaunty angle, too. If he perspired unduly or suffered therefrom he kept it to

himself. I never heard him complain. I never recall that he suggested we rest. It was always, "Another kilometer before we quit—an early start now—the sooner we get in the sooner we'll get out." He was untiring and invincible.

But even the strongest crock goes once too often to the well, and I stayed by him. Not so easily was I forgetting the past. I wanted to be in at the inevitable collapse.

Farther back, shambling and sweating, would be the fat little botanist, often walking but more often being carried. He was finding the trail not easy going, and despite his overexuberant high spirits, which came out at odd moments, doubly reassuring us that they were a masquerade, we saw through the ruse. My own wish was that he could be sent back, but we were too far away from the German frontier. I said nothing but watched him with increasing concern. Somewhere ahead we would strike the jungle. There his real troubles would begin.

Rodenbach would bring up somewhere in the rear, lounging along with his swaying, lengthy gait, and, like Von Harden, showing no signs of tiring. He was burned to a mahogany hue, his thick glasses were forever being cleaned, and he had not lost his ability to sleep at a moment's notice.

Of late he had found a new source of torment for Herr Major. He had developed a considerable pleasure in talking to the porters during the day's march, and since Von Harden was anxious to be everywhere about, missing nothing, Rodenbach saw to it that his time was well taken up. One moment Von Harden would be at the head giving me directions, the next he would be rushing to the rear

to find Rodenbach's eloquence holding the natives spell-bound.

"I wish you would stop it," Von Harden said to him one day. "It does not make for discipline."

"What? I can't talk to the porters? What's the matter? Why—why . . ." he'd splutter on perplexedly, pulling at his scraggling mustaches.

"You are forgetting your place. You are making the niggers forget theirs."

"Say," in deadly earnest, "you're a Christian, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am a Christian, but this . . ."

"Well, then. The Lord says, 'Love one another.' Now how can you . . ."

Von Harden would mutter to himself and find an excuse to come to the head of the line. He could not handle Rodenbach.

It was so in most things. Rodenbach either paid no attention to Von Harden, or would so involve him in light banter that the original query would be lost in a maze of persiflage.

But Von Harden was learning.

One day I found my rifle stock drying and threatening to crack under the sun's blistering rays, and I lost no time in having it rubbed with palm oil. My actions did not escape his keen eyes, and he sent a servant to borrow the bottle while he remained in majestic isolation within his tent. It was a simple gesture, but I liked to see through it. We might yet bring him around.

The change in our surroundings came with the suddenness that is true of everything with which the jungle has to do. The day came that we topped a small hill, and there, shimmering in the far distance, the bush turned from faded brown to a verdant green.

I carried the news back to Von Harden, who received it without any trace of emotion. Müller uttered a fervent "thank God." Rodenbach yawned when I told him.

Slowly we left the dry country behind. The emergence was gradual yet sure. Green underbrush was springing up around us, low bushes, and on the second day what might have been a mirage became a towering full-leaved tree. The following morning we were awakened by the chattering of a group of monkeys overhead; farther on we let a snake dispute the trail with us and win, and the last ten kilometers we covered with renewed energy.

We sent Soko in advance and soon had reports of a village ahead, a detour of half a day, still another on a discovery of a second village, and that moment was happiest when we surprised a young rhino who blinked at us then scuttled away. The river was close at hand.

The following noon we reached it. Broader than any we had yet seen, we consulted our maps. It was the Niger, the great river. It could be no other.

But Von Harden was not satisfied. First he must make sure. He sent me off in one direction with a party of armed porters while he took another. I covered a radius of ten kilometers, and not a native or a sign of a village did I see. Happy, I went back to the others. Soon after, Von

Harden came in, and before the sun went down we received the instructions we had so long waited to hear, clipped and unemotional though they were.

"Here we will make a permanent camp. You gentlemen will embark upon your duties. Remember, if you get away from this base, never break your line of communications."

It was a joyful moment. We posted guards at strategic points around us so that we could not be approached without warning, and a half kilometer back from the Niger's bank we settled down deep in the growth of luxuriant foliage.

In a twinkling canvas floors were laid and tents put up. A permanent cook tent was erected. It was a pleasure again to sort out one's equipment, to have a folding table on which things could be laid.

The blacks threw up grass shelters. We posted companies to work each day while the others slept, and for the first time in weeks the only grumbling was over the hunting. Why were we not hunting?

They brought us fish from the river, Von Harden was after guinea fowl with his shotgun, and I kept myself employed seeing to the orderly running of the camp.

Our scientists lost no time in getting to work. Soon the tap-tapping of Rodenbach's hammer, the filling of bottles with earth samples, and the pounding down of test tubes were commonplaces.

Müller appeared to bloom again. His worried look disappeared, and one day with a butterfly net, another with endless bottles for plant samples, he was in his element. Each night, long after the camp had retired, each of them

would be writing in his tent; notebook after notebook was filled under calcium lights, and outside the briefest of fires kept the animals away and gave us the secrecy we so much desired.

Von Harden was never still. The second day he discovered a village several kilometers away, the third he found one on the opposite side of the river, well back. He would sit for hours secluded on the river bank watching for canoes. He saw many natives but no whites. We were safe.

Save for Von Harden's imperishable militarism and his curtness which were no more to me than to any of the others, we got along well. And in my work about the camp was the solution of my wrongs at his hands. Again I determined to wipe the slate clean. I would give him no cause to find fault with me.

But we were never allowed to forget we were under a strict disciplinarian, a militarist of the old school. Each morning he would inspect the native quarters, he found an excuse to come into my tent, and I think he would have inspected the two scientists' had not Rodenbach proved too much for him.

"You can look at the niggers' camps, but don't come near mine," he said. "I'm a very disorderly person. Let me and Müller alone. What about it, Müller?"

"Oh, now, Herr Doktor. Please don't have any more trouble. Let him do whatever he wants. Remember our duty is to the Fatherland. We shouldn't let personalities . . . oh, please, Herr Rodenbach . . ."

"But, Müller, are you going to let that fellow tell you

how you should sleep and how many times a day you should wash?"

"Please, Herr Doktor, please. Don't start any trouble. Please, Herr Doktor." His brow would wrinkle in a deep frown, and Rodenbach would walk away smiling.

We stayed in that first camp a week. Then Rodenbach announced that he was through; Müller would finish that afternoon. Von Harden gave orders to evacuate after breakfast the following morning.

"Three more stops like this and we will be done," I heard him say to Müller. "I would give anything to know the situation in Morocco."

It was the first time in days I had heard him mention the war clouds, though I knew he was thinking of them, because I had made an interesting discovery.

I had noticed now that evenings when Müller, Rodenbach, and I might find a moment to rest in a hammock after their reports were written, Herr Major was never present. Nor was he sleeping. He was always in his tent, his slim figure outlined in shadow as he sat writing over his desk or pacing the floor, back and forth, back and forth, a cigarette between his lips, his hands clasped behind him. I thought again of Napoleon. One morning, as he was inspecting the natives' quarters, I found an excuse to enter his tent.

Pinned on one side of the canvas were several maps, the same one of France I had seen before, and with it others in smaller detail: Alsace, Belgium, the defences of Liége, Namur, one heavily marked "secret," "the defenses of Paris," and others. On the desk lay several

books whose titles were in keeping: *Cavalry Tactics*, *Feeding an Army Afield*, *Morale of the German Soldier*, and *The Road to Paris*.

He was incorrigible. Yet he was typical of a caste, and with his type ruling the Fatherland in 1911 I wondered what would be the future of Germany. The militarists were too anxious to fight. One day they would be accommodated. But what of us Germans who were not of the army?

For two days we skirted the bank of the river, a guard well ahead to warn us of oncoming canoes, another behind to see that we were not followed. The country was rough and uneven; we made our own trail, avoiding villages.

Fortunately, for I had wondered about it when we started and feared the effects on the natives, Von Harden snapped a command that the porters should march single file.

"Until we strike open country," he amended brusquely.

Müller now was in a seventh heaven. Not a kilometer could we cover that he was able to keep up with the main body. He was forever jumping off the trail: a new flower, a kind of bush he hadn't seen before, everything drew his interest. Sweating and mopping seemed to be a pleasure to him. His notebook was never idle, nor were the porters assigned to him, who were forever being called back to him to pack away new specimens in their chop boxes.

And if they thought that as fast as our foodstuffs were used up their boxes would remain empty, they were sorely disappointed. A thirty-pound box of salt when emptied was quickly filled with forty pounds of Müller's

shrubs, or, worse still, Rodenbach's rocks, for he was as busy as the botanist. Tap-tapping, sounding every rock and carrying away samples, analyzing every water hole and bottling specimens, the porters were having no easy time.

On we went, and never did we meet a living person until the third day, when Von Harden brought us abruptly into a village on the edge of a clearing.

"We need eggs and milk," he said to me. "You barter for them. Don't get me into it. I don't want to meet the niggers."

"Very good, Herr Major." I was glad to hear him being more reasonable. We badly needed a change from our tinned-food diet.

"And don't let our men stop to gamble," he shouted as we started away. "We haven't time."

"They've got to have a slight stop," I said. "They can't understand what's going on."

"Oh, can't they?" He turned suddenly.

"No. They're grousing a lot among themselves because we aren't hunters."

"They are?" He came back to me. "Who? Pick them out! I'll teach them to obey orders!" His chin jutted out, and his eyes bored through mine. Instantly he had reverted to the old Von Harden. "Point them out to me!"

I recalled the episode surrounding my first sight of him, and I wanted no more of it. I knew how he handled porters. I wouldn't give him a chance.

"Nobody specific. Everybody." Which wasn't true, but

it was my only salvation. He glared at me a moment, then strode ahead.

He came into the village with us without splitting the party and endured the inquisitive eyes of the inhabitants, but only so long as it took him to walk to the outskirts of the dozen native shacks.

The inhabitants were Gurmas, an offshoot of the Fulah race, noted throughout Africa for their deceitfulness. And despite their apparent friendliness I noted that they cast shifty eyes on our Konkombwa porters.

The porters in turn displayed a restlessness I had never seen before. We were in territory new to them, and the Fulahs were their ancient enemies. The village may have held only twenty-five men, as against our eighty, but the cause for the porters' concern lay deeper than appeared on the surface.

On entering the village we had passed a heavy war drum, and I knew that it was indelibly pictured in every porter's mind. Its presence meant that within hearing distance were other Gurma villages, hidden in the deep jungle. And should our hosts grow hostile toward us, within a matter of minutes they could boom out a warning calling on their adherents to take up arms against us. A half-dozen strokes, properly timed and of varying intensity, could tell the entire story of our party, the number of porters, the number of whites, our condition, and estimate fairly closely the number of our arms. There was reason to be concerned. Outwardly and to the unpractised eye the Gurmas were friendly enough. But our porters, and I also, caught an undercurrent of mistrust.

The chief met us, and the usual palaver followed. Gifts were exchanged, also compliments, the usual African trail compliments that mean nothing and are so accepted, yet are the custom. Herr Major did not improve things by deserting us and refusing to meet the chief. There was a muttering among the inhabitants, our porters kept together in a huddled, restless group, and I thought it well to be away as quickly as possible.

When we got out we had thirty eggs and several calabashes of milk. Müller thought that meant they were friendly. Rodenbach and I knew better. However deep their distrust, they would extend the amenities of the trail up to the last moment of an open break. And with our eighty men contrasted to their twenty-five, they would be friendly. But when we were out again on the trail—that might be a different story.

The chief came along the path to see us off. To his artful questioning I replied that we were big-game hunters. He wondered why we had no bag to show. I further explained that we had not yet started to hunt, but from the look of skepticism that passed over his face I knew he was not satisfied. With much head shaking and finger waving he consulted his aides. The more they jabbered the more they did not believe us.

"Come on, come on," Von Harden shouted, coming back and finding us talking, "don't waste time with that nigger."

Reluctantly and yet gladly I pushed on, leaving an inquisitive chief behind surrounded by a crowd of chattering villagers. They watched us disappear with obvious

misgivings. It was not a pleasant episode. I feared it would have a sequel, and for an hour I listened intently for the reverberations of the war drum, but they never came. Nevertheless, I was not convinced.

Several kilometers farther on we made a brief noonday rest on the edge of a veldt. In the distance we could see again the beginning of the jungle, a darker green, aloof, and ominously silent. It was the real jungle. It seemed to me to offer the seclusion we needed, and I went to Von Harden. I could not forget the questioning look on the chief's face.

"They don't believe we are hunters," I said. "May I suggest we go on? There's a jungle up ahead. It will give us good cover."

"I saw they didn't trust us. You leave the suggestions to me. I'm responsible for this party."

Just the same I noticed that our stop was briefer than usual, and when we pushed on he dropped back with two gun bearers to cover our rear. Again he seemed to act on my advice, but his conceit prevented his acknowledging it. I began to doubt that I could be as tolerant with him as I had hoped. He seemed to be forcing me along to another open break. Our troubles were multiplying with each step.

**F**RITZ, Fritz," Müller came rushing to me during a halt that afternoon. "My book, my notebook. It's gone. It's gone, Fritz. I must have left it at last night's camp. All my work, my records . . ." He was in a frenzy. "I used it last night, but I couldn't have packed it. It's not in the box. All my records. Oh, Fritz! What'll I do? What'll I do . . .?"

"Do? What's the matter with you?" Von Harden had come up before I could answer him. "What did you lose?" He spoke with a withering sarcasm. He was standing with his hands on his hips, and I saw him again on the platform at Sokode, glowering after the same depressed Müller.

"My records, Herr Major. My notebook." He was on the verge of tears. He whimpered, and his hands shook. He forgot that he was wringing with perspiration and a rivulet was coursing down the side of his neck. "I . . . I . . . I left it behind. . . ." His voice trailed off, and like a schoolboy he hung his head.

"Your what? Your notebook! You—you—you blubbering idiot!" Von Harden was furious. "You—you—" He took his hat off and ran his fingers over his closely cropped hair. "You've given me trouble since I started." His chin shot out, and his bullet head was thrust forward. "Why

should I be saddled with such a helpless old woman—such a fool? Ach! Bah!"

He walked away fuming, then suddenly came back, thrust his finger into Müller's face, and was about to say something when he shook himself, ran his hand along the side of his face as though he had arrested an impulse to strike the botanist, and turned away.

"Nagel," he called back, "take five porters and go back after his damned book. Quick now, we'll camp a few kilometers on."

I turned back to speak to Müller when I noticed he wasn't at my side. Instead he was on the ground. He had fainted. I called some blacks to pick him up. As they were bearing him away Rodenbach came lounging into the circle. But I had no time for him.

I found Soko, picked out four others, and told them to take only their arrows. I had my rifle; the pistol I left behind. We had to move fast. As I started, Rodenbach was slapping Müller's face in an effort to bring him to.

"What happened?" I heard him asking. "Did Von Harden hit you? Müller . . . Müller . . ." I couldn't wait.

We were two hours out on the trail for the day, deep in the jungle. The camp site to which I was back-tracking was the one to which we had made a forced march from the village with the inquisitive chief. I understood Von Harden's motive in urging me to hurry. Should the notebook be picked up and turned over to a French official, anything might happen. It would be a complete exposé. We had to get it back at any cost.

The trail was easy to follow. Eighty-four men cannot

single file through a jungle without leaving a wake of crushed undergrowth, and our men had been no exceptions. The route was before us as plain to a practised eye as a street in a city.

Suddenly, after we were out some distance, Soko held up his hand, paused a moment to listen, then crouched behind a bush. I followed and motioned to the others to do likewise. Soko crept forward inch by inch, until finally, after a careful look forward, he waved me to come up. When I got to his side he put his hand over his mouth, then parted the bushes and pointed ahead. I looked out carefully, and what I saw caused me to take a firmer grip of my rifle. It was loaded and ready; I would use it if I had to.

A native was standing in the clearing where we had camped. The stillness was so complete that the chirp of a bird would have been a thunderclap. He was looking idly through a brown-covered book which could be none other than the one we sought. Even the pages as he turned them made no sound; the scene was so lifeless it might have been painted.

At first I concentrated on him; then I glanced at the surroundings. Three other blacks were near by. They were rooting in the charred débris of the cook's fire. Occasionally a hand would dart out to pick something up and convey it to a grinning mouth. Yet there was no sound. It was uncanny.

The book held me. I could tell from the puzzled expression of the man holding it that he had no idea what it was.

I bent toward Soko and whispered: "From the last village?"

He nodded.

"Any others with them?"

He leaned forward to take a closer look. Suddenly there was the briefest of noises like the flutter of a bird's wing. I was watching the book all the time, and I am sure the man did not look in our direction.

Instantly Soko leaped to his feet. By the time I was up beside him the clearing was bare. Not a native was in sight, nor was there any movement of the bush to show which way they had fled. Not a leaf stirred. They had melted into thin air.

"Get them," I said to him. "I want that paper."

He spoke sharply to the others who came up to us, their eyes alert, their bows on the *qui vive*.

I lifted my rifle to the ready. Forgetting caution, I rushed forward into the clearing. Then I paused, confusedly. It was as deathly still as though I had imagined the entire episode. There was not a sound to guide us. Yet any moment a flock of poisoned arrows might come flying out of the silent greenery.

"Which way?"

Soko spoke to the others, who began examining the ground. After a moment, "Can't tell," he said.

They had eluded us.

I was silently cursing the turn of luck when a shout from him brought me back to reality. Quickly he stooped over and picked something up. I had forgotten to look on

the ground. It was the book. The man had dropped it on the first sound and fled.

I slapped Soko on the back. "You get two pounds of salt," I said. "This might save our lives."

I expected him to grin in reply, but he did nothing of the sort. He commenced jabbering with the others in a dialect I had never heard. Then he turned and spoke to me in Eewee.

"Maybe they come back with more arrows."

It was a wise observation. I would take advantage of it.

"We go back," I said. "Quick...."

He motioned to the others, and we prepared to start back over the trail. It wasn't five minutes between the time we had first seen the Gurmas before we were trotting out of the clearing. I let the blacks go ahead, then I put the book inside my shirt and took after them. I was in high spirits: our quest had been successful.

An hour or so out, something began plaguing me. I stopped and looked at the book. It was the kind Müller used—I opened it and recognized his diminutive handwriting; then I turned the leaves, and something seemed to catch at my throat.

The back part was torn out—missing. But we had not heard the man in the clearing do it, nor had we seen any papers in his hands. It was a mystery.

I was debating whether or not to go back and have a further look when suddenly a shot, low pitched and sharp, reverberated out of the jungle ahead. For a moment I couldn't place it. Then I knew. It was Von Harden's high-powered Mauser.

What had caused him to use it? Had the inquisitive Gurmas cut ahead of us and attacked the camp? I waited a moment, but no other sound came.

"Go ahead," I said to Soko. "Watch out. Maybe these men went around us."

He nodded and started away.

I was worried over the loss of half the book with its incriminating evidence, and now this new menace up ahead. It seemed to me that we were getting more beset with difficulties each mile we got farther into the jungle. With Von Harden acting his old self again and now Müller fainting, anything might happen. The prospect was none too engaging. Yet, I had come after adventure. It was evident that I would not be disappointed. I had a feeling that events of paramount importance were about to happen. Well, I went on. Let them come. And they came. My troubles were beginning.

We found the camp a pandemonium. Never had I seen the porters so jubilant. The reason could not be avoided. It lay in the center of a pile of tents and ropes, cooking utensils and equipment, all scattered around it in a mêlée. It was a rhinoceros, and a big one. My fears had been groundless.

I saw Von Harden climbing over it, a broad grin on his face. Rodenbach was standing knee deep in canvas and chop boxes, peering incredulously at the scene and tugging at his mustaches. So great was the excitement when we came in that for a moment nobody paid any attention to us.

Then Müller saw me. He came waddling over, concern in every feature.

"Have you got it, Fritz, have you got it? *Mein Gott!*" when I gave it to him. "Fritz, you are a great man. Oh, *mein Gott*, Herr Major will be so happy."

"What's this?" I asked, pointing to the confusion.

He could not answer me. He was hugging the book to his breast and thanking all the saints in the Bible.

I went over to Rodenbach, who received me with a grin. "Did you see it?" he asked, his grin broadening.

"I just came back. What happened?"

"Von Harden," incredulously.

"Von Harden what?"

"Why, we'd made camp, had all the tents up, and the cooks were at work when suddenly this rhino came out of the bush like an express train, ran right through the kitchen, and crashed into Müller's tent. He was out, fortunately. I was in here asleep. Everybody began to scream, and I woke up. It was the oddest thing. That damned Von Harden." He was musing, a grin still on his face.

"Then what?" I was impatient.

"Just as I lifted up the flap of the tent to look out, this big thing came crashing through and brought everything down on my head. Then it wheeled around and was starting back when suddenly Von Harden came out the door of his tent and shot it. I just got my head out from under all this in time to see him do it. My God, what a man!" He looked around, blinking at the trail of wreckage. The rhino had uprooted everything that had been standing save Von Harden's tent.

"But I only heard one shot," I queried.

"That's the point. He only needed one shot."

I recalled the episode of the dead snake and was about to tell him of it when suddenly Von Harden saw me. His smile vanished. He was more interested in me than in the rhino.

"Nagel, Nagel," he shouted, coming down off the animal's back. "Where is the book?" He held out his hand. There was no question of any trouble I might have had. I had been sent out to get it, and evidently it had not occurred to him that I might fail. I was glad I wasn't under him in the army.

"Herr Müller has it."

"Good." It was the first time he had ever lauded, however feebly, anything I had done. "You got it," he snapped at me with a half smile.

"Yes. I got it. I found four natives with it."

"What—natives! Were they following us?" He was impatient, and he stepped close to me. I thought that in that instant his face grew ten shades redder. "Quick—what natives?"

It told him the story of the trip in detail. He heard it without a word or a movement of his features to betray his keen interest. His eyes flashed, and he listened carefully. When I had finished he pointed his finger at me.

"Why didn't you go back and get those pages? Do you know what they might lead to?" His eyes were piercing mine, and his face was set in rigid lines.

"Yes, I know. I heard a shot up here and thought you were in trouble."

"Oh." He backed away, and there was a sneering tone in his voice. "So you came up here to protect me. Nagel, the head porter! To protect me! You blockhead. Those pages might be our death. . . ."

I didn't hear him out. I felt the blood rushing into my face. My old hatred for him flared up. It was too deeply rooted to be put aside by resolutions, however firm. There was such a noise inside my head that my ears refused to function. I knew that my face was livid. But now I had something to worry *him*. I had him where I wanted him. He had committed the overt act.

"No," I snapped back, interrupting him, "I didn't come here to *protect you*. You're God, you don't need protection. Perhaps I came to *get you*."

I waited a moment for emphasis. He gave me no chance. He stepped forward again, his eyes narrowing and glaring into mine.

"Get me. What do you mean, get me? *You get me . . .*"

Rodenbach came up, and I had a blurred vision of Muller puffing and panting toward us. He was saying something I couldn't hear. I couldn't hear anything at that moment. I was on the verge of smashing Von Harden's insolent, arrogant face. I wanted to see his absurd monocle in a thousand pieces, I wanted to rip his white uniform coat to shreds. My fists were clenched, and I braced my shoulders.

"Just that. Get you," I repeated. "Have you got a French permit to shoot big game?" I asked, pointing to the rhino. "Have you? . . . I've tried to ask you twice before."

His features relaxed into a grin. "A permit. Am I such a fool as to go to the French for a permit?"

"You might wish you had. You're not God any more."

"What do you mean, Nagel? Speak up." He reverted to barrack-room German. I knew I had him worried.

I spoke slowly and decisively. I didn't want him to miss an implication.

"I mean that according to the French law which every native knows, there's a reward of five thousand francs gold for foreigners poaching big game. Dead or alive . . . five thousand francs gold. That means you," I added, tapping him on the chest with my hand. "You wouldn't let me warn you twice before. You will be the cause of our death, not I. I tried to warn you . . ."

For a moment he looked at me as he had looked at the native who touched his precious boots. I was hoping he would make a move to strike me. But he didn't. Instead he began to laugh, and I felt my fury rising until I trembled.

"You can get five thousand francs for me, dead or alive?"

"Just that. I or anybody else."

His laughter rose to a crescendo. "Well, this for the French law," he growled out, snapping his fingers, "and this for you." Again he snapped his fingers. Then with a motion that was so quick I instinctively lowered my head behind my shoulder, he drew out his pistol. I was reaching around my belt, only to discover I hadn't mine on me, when suddenly he thrust his into my hand.

"Take this and get the reward."

He turned his back on me and walked slowly away. Over his shoulder floated back echoes of his laughter.

I stood there trembling with anger and holding his pistol. I watched him strut to the far end of the camp and give orders to a group of natives about removing the rhino. He was so absolutely calm, so fearless and daring, that he completely unnerved me. I felt myself quivering all over as I realized that his strategy had defeated me.

Again he had won. I could not down him. He was too much for me.

In a blind frenzy I threw his pistol on the ground. "I wouldn't take five thousand francs gold for you," I screamed across the clearing. "I'm staying to gloat over you when your goddamned arrogance kills you. You . . . you . . ."

The natives stopped in their tracks and looked at me. I could see Rodenbach holding Müller. After a moment, when I had unburdened myself, I looked again at Von Harden. He was still talking to the group opposite me.

I had been shouting defiance at the air!

The jungle into which we plunged, glad to escape the threat of the missing pages, was the real African deep jungle, new to Müller and Von Harden, but familiar to Rodenbach and me. It stretched before us, a solid wall of almost impenetrable green, rising straight up out of the bush, silent and mysterious. Into its protecting arms we fled, deeper into the unknown with each step.

In the new surroundings poor Müller found himself in a quandary. Of late he had taken to his chair again, but here in the jungle where the trail was often a foot or two wide at best, and more frequently we had to send men ahead with machetes to slash out a narrow way for us, Müller was trapped. He had to proceed on foot. It was the roughest kind of going for him. He had not met anything like it before.

Back in the bush it had been a simple thing to follow a lead over fairly even ground or around an occasional obstruction. Here everything was an obstruction, every step presented a new problem. For an agile man it was not difficult, but for fat little Müller it was excruciating.

We did not go twenty consecutive feet over level ground or in a straight line. One moment we would be crawling on all fours under a fallen tree trunk; the next, clambering up an inclined trunk until we might be twenty feet off

the ground; then leap to another tree several feet below, along that, drop to the ground, plunge down again under a tunnel, fight through a myriad of tangled creepers fallen from above and force a passage through dense bramble thickets. We plowed through streams innumerable, sometimes above our knees in water; and from the height of each dizzying tree trunk we essayed we could look down into a score of upright branches which might impale us should we be guilty of a misstep.

The greenery above us was so thick we could not see the sun for hours at a time. We were immersed in a light haze, a thin fog, and though it was hot it was not this that bothered us most but the dense humidity that made the atmosphere doubly oppressive. It seemed to be seventy-five per cent warm water, floating water that I knew of old would get into every nook and cranny of our belongings. Nothing could escape it. Not only had we to fight the jungle, but also swarms of mosquitoes to which our light clothing offered no obstacle. For a man unaccustomed and unprepared it was a living hell.

We had been forging ahead for some time when suddenly I missed Müller. I went back along the trail and found him sitting on a rotting log holding his head. He tried to rise and forced a smile when he saw me. Poor old Müller. I can see him sitting there as I came up, the picture of dejection.

We hadn't been a half hour in the jungle, and already he had violated one of my warnings. He was sitting, and as I came up he brushed a horde of insects off his legs, a moment later he was slapping at his back. In the

jungle one does not sit down so casually. Müller seemed beyond the point of caring.

"My God, Fritz!" he said. "Will all of it be like this?"

It was no time to quibble or throw out false hopes. "Pretty much," I said.

"Well, why doesn't he make camp? Oh, Fritz, I can't keep this up. I mean," he hastily amended, "I can't keep up with them. But I'll always find them," he added brightly. "I may be slow, but I'll get there. I'll get there, Fritz, don't think I'm all in. No, sir," he said, "I'm still with you." He was pathetic.

He got to his feet, and as I turned to lead the way I saw with his first step that he was limping. I hadn't the heart to let him know I had seen. I went ahead at as slow a pace as possible, his panting breath close behind. Occasionally I would stop and listen. I could hear the crackling of branches up forward, and by heading toward them we eventually reached the others, who were making a camp for the night.

"Well," Von Harden said when we came up, "where have you two been? Do you want us to be followed? Why don't you keep up with us?"

His willingness to bring on another row with me caused me to bristle. I was ready for him. I wouldn't satisfy him by telling the real reason we were late. I wanted to protect Müller. He was a fine little man, forlorn and helpless though he might be. Perhaps it was his helplessness that found a responsive chord in me. I would give Von Harden no satisfaction.

"The jungle's getting you," I said. "You need to take

more quinine. It's a bad sign when you always want to start trouble."

"Never mind your insolence," he answered. "You keep up with us. I will have no delaying. We must get away from the last camp."

"Take some quinine," I said, turning and starting to walk away.

As I did I almost collided with Müller, who had been standing behind me. "Please don't have trouble on my account, Fritz," he said. "I have caused you enough already."

I laughed and dismissed him with a wave of my hand when he started to walk away. As he did, Von Harden stepped forward and looked after him. He noticed Müller's limp. Then he did a characteristic thing. He put his hands on his hips, braced his legs, threw his head on one side, cleared his throat, and spat.

"Dammed old woman," he said in an undertone loud enough for me to hear. "I shall have trouble with him yet."

I was in a mood to carry the fight to him now, instead of waiting for him to bring it to me, and I was about to step forward when the cook came to me.

"Must kill tins now," he said. "Fresh food all spoil."

That was serious, more serious than fighting with Von Harden. I went with him to look at our supplies. As I feared, the jungle was beginning its work. Much of our flour was mouldy. I broke open several packages of concentrated soups and found them full of worms, and the rice

was stuck together in a sickly, greenish lump. We were in for it.

"All right," I said, "you kill the tins. Tonight you bake all the flour left into bread. We must save everything we can."

Here was an opportunity to get back at Von Harden. Several times during the day he had warned us against using our rifles, he was afraid the noise would give a clue to our presence. Now we would either resort to them for our meals or go without. We had enough food left for perhaps three days. But I would not tell him.

Then I thought of Müller. Working a hardship on Von Harden would also work one on the botanist. Rodenbach and I could care for ourselves. But Müller I could not see in further distress. After all, I would tell Von Harden. But I would wait—there was plenty of time.

Hardly had I left the cook when Rodenbach came up to me.

"Come over here," he said nervously. "I want you to see something."

He took me to the center of the camp, where we found Von Harden arguing with Soko.

"Here," he said on seeing me, "Nagel, you tell them in any damn dialect they can understand that they can't have any fires tonight. Tell them that."

"Fires?" I couldn't understand what he was getting at.

"Go on," he prodded me, seeing my hesitation, "tell them no fires. I'm not sure we're not being followed."

He turned back to Soko, and I took the opportunity to

look at Rodenbach and smile. But the geologist was doing anything but smiling. He was looking at the back of Von Harden's head with the same puzzled expression I had seen at Mangu. Then he looked at me and nodded.

"Tell them," he said to me in Eewec, "tell them and watch the result."

Reluctantly I translated Von Harden's message. I knew that around us the jungle was thick with carnivores and that such a revolutionary command would bring trouble in the ranks, more than the edict of marching four abreast. It was bound to start something, and it did.

Instantly the men were together in a palaver that nothing could stop. Von Harden lost his temper so far as to rush among them, slashing out right and left with his now familiar riding crop, and I tried to talk to Soko, but soon gave it up.

Meanwhile Rodenbach had plunged after Von Harden and caught him by the arm, whirling him around.

"You can't do that," I heard him shout above the din. "These men will kill you. Do you realize we are four to eighty?"

I could not hear Von Harden's answer. They were in the center of a mad group of infuriated natives whose pent-up hatred of Von Harden now was coming to the surface.

I jumped forward and fought my way to them. "Let's have a regular palaver," I said, "you can't do anything by fighting them this way."

"Yes," I heard Rodenbach shout, "have a palaver, palaver, palaver . . ." I saw him again catch Von Harden

by the arm and push him back. We had to forget personalities now, we might be fighting for our lives.

Suddenly I saw Soko. "Tell them we'll have a palaver," I shouted above the mêlée; "everybody sit down, and we'll go into it." I wanted to say more but I couldn't. I was confused and excited.

Luckily Soko caught my meaning. I heard his deep voice booming above the others, and after a hectic few minutes the din began to subside. Then I looked for Von Harden and found him off to one side arguing with Rodenbach. The geologist was furious; his face was livid, and he was shaking his finger in Von Harden's face. Strangely enough Von Harden seemed to be taking it, and I recalled the way Rodenbach had grabbed him at the height of the confusion and pinned down his arms. Rodenbach could handle him.

Finally we had the natives quiet and sitting around us on the ground. Soko was spokesman for them, I was interpreting for Von Harden and Rodenbach, who had suddenly projected himself into the scene in a way that was heartening.

Soko's first speech was to the point. He arose with great dignity and addressed me.

"Little white master," he said, "we love you and we love the man like a hippopotamus and the giraffe man. But the hyena man who is always making a noise we do not love. We think that just now when he has beaten his loyal porters he has gone too far. Many of the men are for leaving the camp now. There are several among us like the leopard who can slip through the jungle without leaving a

sign. We could get back to our bush safely. But I have told the men that if they desert they will be arrested and put on the roads. Several men from our bush were put on the roads for life, and we know what a terrible fate that is. So perhaps they will not desert. But I have not control of all of them."

He paused several times while I translated to Von Harden, and as I looked at our Napoleonic leader I saw that he was sitting submissively with Rodenbach's hand on his arm, as though holding him down. I wondered how long he would be able to restrain himself.

When he had heard me out he jumped to his feet.

"You tell these dirty niggers I'll kill the first one who dares to walk out of this camp. Tell them that. Tell them, tell them . . ."

Instantly Rodenbach leaped up, and as he did I noticed a stirring among the natives. I began to have my misgivings. I dropped Rodenbach for a moment and gave my attention to the blacks, and what I heard chilled my blood.

One of them understood enough German to catch Von Harden's reply. He was telling the others. That started a further pandemonium. Then Rodenbach began to address them in a full, vibrant voice. He was talking in Eewee.

"You men can build your fires," he said. "Build all the fires you want. But you must promise the little white master and the giraffe man that you will not desert us. If you do you will be arrested when you get back to your bush."

Soko calmed the others with difficulty, and they chat-

tered among themselves. Then he arose, bowed to Rodenbach and to me:

"The black man is not afraid to camp without a fire. But he knows the white masters fear the people in the last village. The black man hasn't the rifle the white master has, and he fears the leopard that reaches out of the darkness and carries away the people who walk in the jungle. So the men will stay here. They will not desert. In return they ask that the hyena man will not be so cruel to them."

I spoke at some length on the trust placed in the men by the whites and after complimenting Soko on his diplomacy in handling the situation, we broke up. As I was leaving the group I suddenly thought of the hippopotamus man. He had not been present. He might be in trouble. I went in search of him.

He was sitting on a pile of boxes in the half gloom at the edge of the clearing. He was holding his head as I had found him on the trail, though this time he had taken the precaution to place an oiled cloth under him.

"Something is the matter with me," he said. "Fritz, I'm afraid I'm a burden to the party. I'm always giving you trouble. We started out with such high hopes, and always we have fights. What is the matter with us?"

"The jungle does this to every safari," I answered. "We get sick of the sight of each other. Don't worry about it."

"But I can't help worrying," he said. "I seem to be the cause of it all. I'm always giving you trouble." He dropped his head into his hands again, and I knew he was sobbing. The day's trek had been too much for him.

"How do you feel?" I asked apprehensively. I had a premonition that he was not well.

"My head aches, and I am cold. Fritz, I can't keep warm, but I am sweating. What does that mean?"

My fears were confirmed. He was exhausted, his head ached, he was cold and sweating at the same time.

"You get a big dose of castor oil," I said. "Have you been taking your quinine?"

"Yes." He seemed too tired to say more.

"Just the same, you get the castor oil. Wait here for me."

I left him and found Rodenbach. "Müller has malaria," I said. "I'm dosing him with castor oil."

"Will he take it?"

"He'll have to take it. If he gets sick, we're in a hell of a hole. I'll sit on him and make him take it."

"That's the idea. We have troubles enough."

"I didn't tell you that the food is moulding."

"Oh, God, Nagel!" He looked at me and shook his head. "Between Müller and Von Harden and the blacks, and the food going bad, what is ahead?"

I shook my head and walked toward my equipment.

"It's too late to worry now," I said. "We're in here."

VON HARDEN's eyes were everywhere. He missed nothing. When he saw me taking the castor oil to Müller he followed. Trailing him was Rodenbach, who had become something of a watchdog himself, never letting Von Harden get out of sight. We might have been three ghouls haunting each other.

Müller was still holding his head when we got to him. On noticing the procession coming up he affected an attitude of casualness.

"I'm all right," he said, anticipating us, "I'm all right. I just feel tired." He spread his hands in a gesture of indifference. "I'm not used to this sort of walking. But I'll be with you. I'll——"

"What's the matter with you?" Von Harden snapped sullenly.

"I'm sweating and I'm cold at the same time," the botanist said. As always his smile vanished; he cowed before Von Harden. He was in awe of him.

"Everybody else is sweating and nobody's cold," looking around at us. "I wear this heavy coat and I'm sweating."

"Yes, Herr Major," came weakly from Müller. "I know, I'm sorry. I'm afraid I'm a burden. But I want to get my

work completed. I *must* get it completed. After that I don't care what happens. If only . . ."

I thought that here was the solution. Once working, Müller would become so absorbed he would forget himself. And I knew his patriotism was so sincere that if given the chance he would work, despite whatever was ailing him. I was on the verge of making a suggestion when Rodenbach interrupted.

"Say," he said, turning to Von Harden, "this is likely country. I'd like to do something here myself. We must be twenty kilometers from the last camp. Why not—" he was tapping Von Harden on the chest, he was telling him, not asking—"why not stop over here?"

Müller raised his head, a gleam of hope in his face.

"Please, Herr Major, make a camp here," he said. "I'll feel better if I get to work." His voice was eager, and I sensed a note of deliverance.

"It's the only hope," Rodenbach was saying *sotto voce* to Von Harden. "Make a camp here, make a camp." He was knocking on the military coat with one hand while the other was waving before the monocle.

Von Harden was silent a moment. His chin was out, and he was obviously displeased. It was not so much, I knew, at the difficulties of Müller, but because Rodenbach was suggesting the obvious thing to do. Herr Major was displeased because he had not brought up the idea himself. He slapped at a mosquito on his neck, took his hand away, and found it blood-stained.

"Damn them," he said. "You can't get away from them. All right," he went on, turning to Müller, "we'll see

what is the situation in the morning. If we haven't any trouble tonight we'll push on another day and make camp. I think this is good country for you two to work over."

Having delivered the edict, he turned on his heel and walked away. Rodenbach winked at me and went after him.

"That's fine, Fritz," Müller said. "If I get to work I know I'll feel better. And I've got to get my work done. It's for the Fatherland. I must get it done."

"All right," I answered, producing the bottle and a spoon. "Get this in you, and you'll either get well or die. It will take the malaria out of you in one night."

I filled a tablespoon, and with a grimace he opened his mouth.

"Ach, ach, phew, oh, Fritz." It was down.

"Stay here until your hammock and netting goes up," I said, "and I'll help you get in."

"Fritz, you are good to me." He brushed a spider off his head; it had hung down from above. He was smiling wryly.

"Forget it," I said, walking away. Good old Müller, he was like a baby.

When I got back to my equipment I found my servant greatly excited. He was holding up the netting for my hammock. It had been used so much that now, instead of being white, it was a dirty gray. But it wasn't this that worried him.

"I pick him up," he said, "he fall five, six piece." It was the jungle. The netting had rotted apart. Luckily the

hammock was of stout canvas, and instead of ropes on the ends we had thin chains.

"All right," I said, getting out my list of boxes. "Number Forty-one, get some new netting. After that you go over my guns again, grease them fresh. Put on a lot."

A dozen fires were made. I saw that the cook utilized everything we had that might spoil. I went back to Müller and put him to bed under two blankets, and I saw Von Harden pacing, pacing inside his tent. Then I begged a cigar from Rodenbach and walking to the edge of the clearing sat down on a log and had a smoke. The camp was quiet.

A ring of fires hemmed in the porters, but nothing could drown their whispered chattering. They had not yet forgiven Von Harden.

The only sign of movement was from Von Harden's tent—he still insisted upon one, though he slept in a hammock swung inside, but he must have the sign of superiority the tent afforded. He was writing, evidently a report. Every few minutes he would rise, hold open the flap, and listen. Then he would return to the makeshift desk under his calcium light.

Outside the only sound was the rustling of the dense roof of greenery that shut out the stars. Occasionally I would hear the barking of an animal near by, and once I saw a pair of yellow eyes that came up close to the fire, stared a moment entranced, then melted into the gloom. Some time later something coughed from high above me.

After an hour, and when the mosquitoes were finding the few holes in my helmet net, I made a final round of

the camp. Rodenbach was snoring with his usual profundity; Müller was hidden under his blankets. A black got up and threw some wood on one of the fires. When I sought my hammock Von Harden was still writing.

I was the first one up in the morning. I guessed it was morning, though it was pitch black around me. As I stepped to the ground I chanced to glance through the wet, murky haze that hung over everything, and on the log where I had sat the night before was Von Harden. He was looking directly at me. A pistol was around his waist, and his light rifle was across his knees. He had been a self-appointed guardian; not that we needed one, for the African natives are trained by necessity to be the lightest of sleepers. Little could come near the camp that would not awaken them.

"Get them up," Von Harden snapped, "get everybody up and let's get started."

"Good-morning," I replied mockingly, "I hope you slept . . ."

"Morning," he grunted. "Let's get under way." He arose, stretched, and started toward his tent, rubbing his chin. "And," he said, turning suddenly, "get me some new netting. Mine fell to pieces in my hand last night."

I found Müller sitting on the edge of his hammock, his feet dangling over the side. He was scratching his head, an amused expression on his face.

"Oh, Fritz," his face lit up as he saw me, "I feel fine. Look at this, look, Fritz." He held up one of his blankets. It was soaking. "See, I perspired all night. That castor oil is fine. Fritz, you are a doctor. Herr Doktor Fritz," he

laughed, and jumped to the ground. Suddenly his laughter stopped short. A look of pained surprise came over him. For an instant he hesitated, grabbing his middle. Then he ran out of the clearing into the forest as fast as his fat legs would carry him.

Within an hour we were moving. The camp duffel had been packed, and with Müller waddling after Von Harden, who was directing the machete wielders, we were off.

The bush around us was dripping, and before we were out a half hour we were wet through. I had brought leather gloves for us to push aside bramble bushes, and we got through these with little difficulty, but when we came to small streams it was a different story. The African method, the one Rodenbach and I followed, was to roll our pants above our knees and plunge ahead. One was bound to get wet in any event, and the only mental attitude was to flounder in and make yourself like it.

With some coaxing Müller came around to our point of view. But the once elegant Herr Major, his slacks now a soggy white, was mincingly stepping out, jumping from one haven to another, and meanwhile cursing the jungle, the weather, and the God who was responsible for them both. The result was what might be imagined. He could not keep dry.

I came upon him picking his way ahead through the water-laden leaves with his trousers still down. He would not compromise. A dozen tiny streams were dripping off his military coat, and his heavy pistol was throwing off a steady rivulet. I stood a moment and watched him.

The once white cap, soggy and limp though it was, and

continually being knocked off by the bushes, was still being worn at the familiar jaunty angle. He was pushing the bushes aside with his dainty riding crop; he had spurned the leather gloves. He chanced to turn around, and I saw that his monocle was firmly fixed in his eye. He was freshly shaven, his coat collar was tightly fastened above his red and insect-bitten neck, and the row of service ribbons was sending a half-dozen multi-colored streams coursing down his chest.

A monocle and riding crop deep in the jungle—and no mosquito netting. It is hard to believe, but it was true. I followed him for half an hour, hoping to see the monocle knocked from his eye by the bushes, but it never was. He was the most absurd picture I had seen in my years in Africa.

He was thick-headed and stubborn, but there was an aura of fascination about him. I have told dozens of old African hands about him, and they refused to believe. But he was there, the monocle, the riding crop, the tightly buttoned uniform, and the jaunty cap.

When Rodenbach came along I pointed ahead and nodded.

"Serves the *dummkopf* right," he said; "I hope he gets pneumonia."

We tramped the entire day without coming upon any evidences that the district was inhabited. It was a world forgotten and forlorn. Late in the afternoon we found a clearing. It was like an oasis in the desert. It was wide and fairly dry, though not wide enough for the sun to look down. Nevertheless, we were grateful.

The wet haze was still around us, the leaves soaking, and the surroundings as mysteriously quiet and impenetrable as ever. But it was better than anything we had seen.

When Von Harden came upon it he waited for us. Müller was the last in. He was soaking from head to toe. I had preceded him only because I had run ahead when I failed to hear the movements of the others in front of me. I didn't want Von Harden to know that Müller might be rid of his slight attack of malaria but still was far from well. The pains in his abdomen worried me. They weren't from the castor oil, as Rodenbach and I well knew. They were from pushing aside wet bushes with his rotund stomach.

"Here we make a permanent camp," Von Harden said simply. "This district is deserted. You gentlemen work fast, and we can get out quickly."

It was a joyous moment, for we were tired of the everlasting fight.

The same procedure was followed as before. We again had permanent tents with the hammocks swung inside. I again had a place to put my razor after shaving, even though everything on the ground stood in cans of oil; the cook had a fireplace, and the porters were glad of the rest.

Again the cook came to me when we were settled.

"Fresh food all gone," he said. "Tins pretty near die. Must kill something."

I went to Von Harden with the warning. I told him that our reserve supply was exhausted, and it might be days before we quit the jungle.

"Fine," he said. "Now I can do some shooting." He wasn't at all worried.

We stayed five days in that second camp. Müller and Rodenbach were in their elements; so also was Herr Major, who kept us supplied with birds and game. I went among the porters and on general principles forced each one to down copious quantities of castor oil. I painted scores of scratches with iodine, I heard innumerable tales of homesickness. When were we going to get out? How long before we would be back in the Konkombwa bush?

"Not long now," I told them. "One more camp and we're through."

Meanwhile Müller and Rodenbach had been prowling, testing, noting, and packing samples. Nights they would write; notebook after notebook was filled.

"It's great country," Rodenbach told me. "There is iron, I think there might be copper, petroleum without a doubt."

"Anything can grow here," Müller said. "Two hundred miles of fine rice land; cotton farther back in the dry country. In three years this jungle could be done away with."

"A garrison of five thousand trained natives could stop the colonial expansion of France and England in Central Africa," I read on a piece of paper Von Harden had thrown away. "Dahomey to the south, the Sudan to the north, Nigeria on the west, and the British Northern Territories on the east. Separating them would be this new German colony. We could menace the entire trade along the Niger River; the road from Timbuctoo to Nigeria and Dahomey

would be in our hands. From a military standpoint this land is invaluable."

"My trip has been successful," Müller said to me as we were preparing to evacuate. "I have made a thorough study of the district."

I wondered at what price, for he had lost pounds, his color had gone, and he was carrying on only by dogged persistence. I thought he announced the completion of his work with a sigh of relief.

He was tired and worn. He could not fool me. I knew he was a sick man. If Von Harden knew it also, he said nothing. The completion of the work was the great thing. I suspected that Von Harden would sacrifice a dozen men to carry out his mission. I knew that he would sacrifice himself if necessary. His duty was his guiding star.

Rodenbach summed it up. "He'd work the three of us to death for the Fatherland," he said. "Fatherland, Fatherland—that's all he thinks about. These inhuman militarists!"

"We push on thirty kilometers more, make one more camp, and we are through," Herr Major said. He smiled and looked back at the groups of porters huddled together waiting to string out in the long line that was familiar.

"Forward . . . maarch!" he suddenly shouted, taking the lead.

Rodenbach looked at me and tapped the side of his head.

As we started, I took note that Rodenbach was holding his head to one side. "What is it?" I asked.

"Something bit me on the neck last night," he said.

"Don't say anything." He was away before I could warn him to cauterize it.

Müller was wearing two pairs of pants and holding on to his middle with both hands. His face was anything but happy. "I don't understand it," he said.

"I do," I answered. "I'm going to hang on to you all the time now."

"Ah, Fritz, you are good to me. Herr Doktor Fritz Nagel," he laughed, but not with his accustomed vigor. His face was strained and etched with lines of worry. Good old Müller, he was game to the core.

An hour out, and one of Von Harden's servants came back to me. Herr Major was a half kilometer ahead.

"The white bwana wants this," he said, thrusting out a paper. I read "permanganate of potash."

"What," Rodenbach asked when he saw it, "is he holding out on us? Müller, Müller," he shouted, "your friend wants permanganate. What's he up to?"

"Please, Herr Doktor, please, let us have no more rows."

"What's the matter with the white bwana?" I asked the man.

"Boils," he said.

"Where?" Rodenbach interrupted.

The black drew his hand across the small of his back. "Too bad," Rodenbach spoke up, "too high by a foot."

Nor had I escaped. I was suffering from a variety of the itch on the inside of my leg. It made walking difficult but I had resolved to be the last one to mention my afflictions.

I found the permanganate and sent the man ahead with it.

An hour later the path Herr Major was cutting came suddenly out on a well used trail, though we were still deep in the jungle. Some distance on I found him waiting for us with the porters in a cluster around him.

"Another village," he said, nodding his head forward. "You barter with them for food. Get some yams if you can. Anything that's fresh."

"All right," I replied. I took the lead and spoke over my shoulder. "Why don't you come in with me?"

"What? Me? I won't have anything to do with the niggers. You're the head porter."

I smiled and went on. I had seen him straighten up suddenly when he had bent forward. The yams were the change of diet he needed for his boils. But he had not indicated his suffering. He wouldn't.

We went on along the trail, sending runners ahead when none came out to meet us, though I knew our presence must be known. They returned empty handed. They had reached the edge of the village without having come upon anyone. That had scared them. It gave me something to worry about. I suspected the symptoms. So did Rodenbach who took my Winchester from my gun bearer.

"Come on," he said, "I'll go up with you."

Von Harden had sensed that we were not satisfied. "What is it?" he asked.

We didn't answer but hurried ahead through the chattering porters.

We found a dozen dirty huts in the center of a still

dirtier clearing. What struck us at once was that the place appeared deserted. No women or children were about. That has but one meaning in Africa.

But in the door of each hut we found men crouched on their haunches watching us through shifting eyes. Each had a bow and a sheaf of arrows at his side.

Hen droppings were all over the place, yam peelings and corn husks were everywhere. The men were Gurmas with a strain of Mossi. That meant they were Moslems, doubtless thieves, and assuredly untrustworthy.

The stares that met us were proof of our fears.

"They've sent the women and children off," Rodenbach said. "It doesn't look good."

I approached one old man, who seemed to be the village headman. He was crouching in his hut doorway with a dozen natives behind him. Through Soko I addressed him in Songhay, the language universal in the Niger district.

"We have heard of the great strength and wisdom of the Fulah people. We would like to trade salt for yams and eggs."

There was no answer. The old man ignored me, he was staring straight ahead.

"We are peaceful hunters and have gifts for the Fulah people," I tried again.

"Look out for this man," Soko interrupted me in Eweee. "They have sent the women away."

The old man gave no sign he had heard us. He sat in stony indifference looking blankly at nothing. He never deigned to look up. Behind us the porters were crowded together watching, watching. I glanced back, and beyond

them saw Von Harden calmly polishing his glass. As much as my mind was elsewhere, I was forced to smile at his indifference.

Then I called a porter and from his chop box produced a bag of salt. I passed this to the old man, who smilingly received it. I thought it was the opening wedge, but I was wrong.

"Which way is the river?" I asked him next.

He didn't know anything about a river. He shook his head and jabbered to those in the hut. Again he shook his head.

"The big river, the big river," I repeated through Soko. Surely he must know it. I knew it was to the east of us but I wanted him to answer. Instead he spoke again to his companions. Then he shook his head more emphatically than before. They knew nothing about any river.

I laid out a lot of salt on the ground. I saw his eyes glisten as he looked at it.

"We want to exchange this for eggs," I told him.

"Eggs? Eggs?" He hadn't any hens. He didn't know where there were any.

"Yes, you've got hens," I replied, pointing to the droppings. "We want to exchange this salt for eggs."

It was useless. He knew nothing about any hens. Then I overturned some yam peelings.

"We want yams, too," I said. "We'll give you this salt for some yams."

He spoke again to those inside the hut. He shook his head and looked up at me perplexedly. He hadn't any yams. He didn't know where there were any. He knew nothing.

"Come on," Rodenbach broke in, taking my arm. "You won't get anywhere with these people. They've got chickens and yam fields hidden somewhere here in the jungle. They mean trouble."

He was right. I repacked the salt, told our now quaking porters that there was nothing to fear, and started out of the village. I was worried and repeated the entire episode to Von Harden.

"I'll cover the rear," he said. He took two of his gun bearers and let us get well ahead. I was leading the way. "Keep north-northwest," he had warned me.

Our porters were wide-eyed with fright. They had recognized all the signs. The presence of the sullen men and their ominous arrows close at hand, and the absence of their women and children, were portents they understood only too well. They were the universal signs of hostility.

We were out about a half hour, cutting a new trail through the jungle, when suddenly I paused. I had heard something that sent the shivers up and down my spine. I cautioned the men behind me to be quiet. They became paralyzed with fright.

I listened again.

"Boom-boom-boom, boom, boom, boom . . . boom."

It was the dull thunder of a war drum, reverberating around us in the abysmal quietude of the jungle.

Far off on our left we heard an answer. Faint yet full of meaning, it made me snap out my pistol and take a hitch in my belt. It was as though a net were closing about us.

Ahead stretched only the solid greenery, quiet, mysterious, aloof, and ominous. What did it hold for us?

Not one of our porters had ever before been so far away from his domain, or his "bush," as the natives call their district. They were Konkombwa men, and they were now in the region of their traditional enemies, the Gurmas, who from time immemorial had been raiders into Konkombwa territory. And now, with this new menace, such obvious signs of hostility that even a native child would have recognized them, our porters were in a frenzy. It only needed the dull booming of the war drum to reduce them to a state of paralyzed fright, six-footers and doughty warriors though the Konkombwas are. Here again, not the seen plagued them, but the threat of the unseen.

Nor did the latest turn of events increase our pleasure at Von Harden's company. He took the episode with a surprising amount of good-humor.

"Now perhaps I can get a few shots at those damnable niggers," he remarked dryly, looking at me, a smile playing about the corners of his mouth and puckering his eyes. "Nagel," he suddenly asked me, "what kind of a license do I need to shoot a few niggers?"

"Why shoot them?" I replied. "They're children. Treat them as such."

"Bah!" He dismissed the subject. "From now on," he spoke up suddenly, "one white man is always behind us

as a guard. If they mean to have trouble, I hope to be the first to meet them. But we should not force the issue. We must first achieve our aim. That is everything. You two men," turning to the languid Rodenbach and wide-eyed Müller, "must complete your missions as quickly as possible. But don't slight it," he interjected so suddenly that Müller broke in:

"No, no, Herr Major, we won't slight it, no, no, I'll make the complete survey." I saw Rodenbach looking at him, amused.

"Don't you worry about us," he said to Von Harden. "We'll do the work. You push on and make a camp. Let's get out of this."

"Good," Von Harden replied. "One more camp and we're through."

Then he turned to me. "There's a big town called Say somewhere out here on our right. In view of this most recent affair we will avoid getting closer to the river. Keep here in the jungle. You break the trail. Keep north-northwest. I'll take the rear." He started back. "I hope some damned nigger comes up behind me," he said half aloud as he called his gun bearers. He walked back desultorily flicking at a horde of insects that buzzed around his head. As he turned I saw that his red, bulging neck was swollen. His flicking had not been entirely successful. But he would not ask for a net.

We finished that day, struck a camp at night, and posted guards, but not a sign or sound did we hear out of the solitude around us. Once camp was made, Von Harden went so far as to back-track on the trail with Soko and

one gun bearer. They returned within an hour with a brace of chickens and Von Harden's coat filled with yams. His story was no more surprising than his nonchalance.

"I found their damned chicken field. Here's what I got. Cook them." He threw them down, removed his glass and started polishing it. Then he shouted for his servant.

"Clean coat—clean coat—clean coat," he said. The boy got one, and within a twinkling Von Harden was as immaculate and unconcerned as ever.

He was too much for me. I sought out Soko. "What happened when you got the yams?" I asked.

"The white bwana found this Gurma man's field," he said. "I get behind bush look in, I see five Gurma man in field. I say, 'Wait, wait!'"

"Yes, yes," I broke in impatiently, "what did he do?"

"He go Haww—phut. He take his rifle, leave us in bush, and go into field. Gurma man look up, but hyena man never see him. He catch chicken, [then he pull up yams. He take off coat, put yams in coat, and call us. That's all."

I knew it was.

I could picture the entire scene. I saw Von Harden look over the field with the five Gurma men, brush aside Soko's warning, clear his throat and spit, and walk forward into the open alone. I saw him put down his rifle, taking no notice of the astonished Gurmas. I saw him catching the chickens and wringing their necks, and I knew that as nonchalantly as he did everything that required courage he had brazenly stalked out of the field without ever glancing back at the men whose chickens and yams he had stolen. That he was trespassing never entered his head.

He wanted the food, and he got it. Thereupon the incident was closed. My only regret was that I had not been present to watch him. He was superb.

I knew also that we would hear again from those Gurmas. And as much as I hated Von Harden on general principles, I knew that when the showdown came he would be in the thick of the trouble. For I sensed now, I had an inexplicable premonition, that difficulties would descend upon us before we saw the last of the jungle. Things were bound to happen, and I felt that they would happen fast once they started.

What I did not take into consideration was that in keeping with the whole picture, our greatest calamity was to come from an entirely unlooked-for source. I guarded against everything I thought might give us trouble. I doused my rash with medicines; Müller had abdominal pneumonia, and I cared for him as well as I could. Von Harden even permitted himself to tell me that he had bad boils around his waist, though he had his servant treat them, not me. Rodenbach was not ailing. He still was able to sleep during the brief noonday rest, he slouched on behind us, sometimes as much as a half kilometer, without a pistol, and nothing happened to him. I saw mosquitoes light on him, but there was nothing to suck. He was indolent on the trail, he took little interest in my worries, and once dinner had been eaten he sought his hammock, unconcerned and casual.

It was nothing immediate that brought about our Gethsemane. In spite of all my vigilance I missed the forest because of the trees.

Thousands of miles away events were happening that signed our death warrants.

The morning of the day we made our final camp the first blow fell. Müller had gone off with two men, his everlasting notebook, and a score of bottles for samples. Rodenbach was prodding the earth in another direction. Von Harden was superintending the greasing of his armory, and I was going among the porters with iodine. Once this job was finished, I was at loose ends. I determined to find Müller and see how he was getting on.

I followed the trail his men had cut, and within a hundred feet of the camp I came upon him, his servants standing wide-eyed watching him. He was sitting on a log holding his foot. His head was bent down on his chest. He was crying. This time, as he saw me coming, there was no attempt at gaycty.

"I have sprained my ankle," he said simply. "Fritz, I have done it."

His shoe was already off, and I took his foot in my hand. The ankle was badly swollen. I cursed his luck. Why couldn't these things happen to Von Harden?

"Fritz, Fritz, what can I do?" He sobbed afresh.

"The first thing is to get you back to camp and some hot water." I sent one of the men back to get his canvas cot. On that we could carry him in. But how he could work with a sprained ankle I could not imagine. We could not go ahead. We could not go back. Luckily the Gurmas were not bothering us. Poor Müller was helpless.

"I'm a burden on the expedition, Fritz," he suddenly spoke up. He was in the depths of despair. "I'm a burden.

Why, oh, why did I come? They should have sent a younger man." He sobbed uncontrollably. His fat little body shook, and when not holding his ankle he would be crossing his arms in front of his abdomen. "I have pains in my stomach, I'm always cold, and now my ankle. Oh, Fritz, what will he say? . . ." He could not overcome the conventional awe of the German civilian for the militarist. Streams of perspiration ran down out of his hair inside his shirt. He was beyond the state of constant dabbing. "What will he say? Oh, Fritz, I'm afraid to face him."

But he did. We lifted him onto the cot, and with the two men holding it above their heads we went back over the narrow trail. As we might have expected, the first person we met was Herr Major.

I saw a scowl come over his face on seeing us. He tugged nervously at his belt, shifted his feet, and his face darkened.

"What's the matter with him now?" he snapped.

"He had an accident," I said. "He slipped off a wet inclined tree trunk and sprained his ankle. He——"

"But it won't interfere with my work, Herr Major," Müller suddenly interrupted. I looked up and saw he had propped himself on one elbow. "It won't interfere with my work. I'll get everything done. You'll see, Herr Major von Harden, you'll see."

Von Harden pointed to Müller's tent. He said nothing, but his scowl deepened. His jaw jutted out, and his lips compressed. He was muttering under his breath as he walked away.

I got some hot water from the cook and bandaged Müll-

ler's ankle as tightly as I could. He stayed on his cot for that afternoon, but the next morning, while I was going about my duties, I went to his tent to see how he felt. The tent was empty. I feared he might have done something rash.

I went out into the center of the camp and found a porter who had seen him hobbling back over the trail he had been working along the day before. I went along it and came upon him on his knees. He was digging some roots and placing them in a box a porter was holding.

"See," he said, "I'm all right. I can get around. I'll pull through, Herr Doktor Fritz," he laughed hollowly. He bent his head down, and I knelt quickly and looked at him. He was holding his breath. He was in agony. But he had guts.

During the five days we stayed in that camp Müller worked every moment. There was not a lazy bone in him, and what excruciating pain he must have gone through was known only to himself. By some superhuman power of will he carried on. In camp there was not a whimper out of him. Rodenbach was busy with his own work, and beyond frequent inquiries, left him in my care. Von Harden had little to do with us. He was either out hunting—we had no hesitancy about using our guns now—or working at his precious maps. We saw little of him. But for Müller and me he had only dark looks. He never spoke to either of us.

To help matters further I took it upon myself to write Müller's reports while he lay back on his cot dictating from endless notes. He would be swathed in blankets, one hand rubbing his abdomen. In that way we got through. Grad-

ually the swelling went down, gradually he regained his composure. But in private he still insisted that he was a burden to the party.

"Once I get my work done," he said, "I don't care what happens. I hope Herr Major isn't too angry with me. I must finish . . ."

"Damn Herr Major!"

"Fritz, Fritz, you don't understand him. We were sent here to do something, and he will see that we do it, never fear—he will do his duty."

"Duty hell!"

Müller would only smile. "Herr Doktor Fritz."

It was while we were packing to leave that the bolt fell.

Two blacks suddenly appeared out of the nowhere. Their presence sent our porters into shrieks of delight. I had to look twice at them to make sure. It was miraculous, yet it happened. They were thin to the point of emaciation, worn and dog tired. They were Konkombwa men.

One was carrying a forked stick, and then I knew. In a crotch in the stick was a letter. It bore no name, but Von Harden grabbed it and withdrew within his tent. I ordered the cook to give the men the best the camp larder held, and while they were the center of an admiring group of friends, chattering and jabbering and felicitating each other, I went toward Von Harden's tent and found Rodenbach standing nervously outside.

"What do you think it is?" he asked.

"It might be anything. It might be nothing."

"Perhaps he won't tell us."

I shrugged my shoulders. He was capable of anything.

Suddenly we heard his step. He opened the flap and motioned with his hand. I could hardly believe my eyes. He was beckoning to me. It was the first time I had ever been invited inside his tent.

As I crossed the threshold I saw that his face was whiter than I had ever seen it. It was so white that the innumerable insect bites which made it appear puffed and poisoned were now difficult to see. Then quickly his emotions changed. There was something about him that held me. I had to look again to make sure. He was grinning. It was not a smile but a broad grin. He was grinning from ear to ear.

In one hand he was holding the message. With the other he waved us to seats on his cot. He handed the message to Rodenbach and started pacing the floor. While Rodenbach was reading it Von Harden spoke to me.

"Well, Nagel," he said, "Von Krocke told me you wanted adventure." He paused and laughed. "I guess you'll get it now."

Rodenbach's eyes flashed over the white paper before him. Then without a word he handed it back to Von Harden. He seemed too taken aback to speak. But Von Harden still wore his devilish smile. He passed the paper to me.

"Read it," he said.

I glanced at it and felt my heart skip several beats. The blood rushed to my face, and I had to read it again to make sure. My eyes were not deceiving me. I read:

*The French and British authorities are aware of  
your presence. They have broadcast a reward for*

*each of you. Every village has been warned to bring you in. The Togoland Upper Volta border is closed to you. Complete your mission as expeditiously as possible.*

*Wakefield.*

"That is Von Krocke's code name," I heard Von Harden explaining through a dull thunder that flooded my head. "It is genuine."

I looked up at him, and he was smiling more broadly than before.

"Now I can shoot some niggers, yes?" He laughed and sat down in a folding camp chair. Rodenbach had not spoken during the entire episode.

"You will keep this secret," Von Harden snapped suddenly in a low whisper. I looked at him again and saw that his smile had vanished. His face was stern and forbidding. He was the militarist giving orders. "You will not tell anyone. I will decide what to do. If we did not have that old woman Müller it would be easy."

Suddenly he rose and held the flap of his tent aside. Without being aware of what I was doing I got up and started out. Rodenbach was behind me. Outside, the porters were still shouting and talking around the two runners.

"Tell them to unpack," Von Harden said as I passed him. "We will stay here tonight in any event. And remember," he added sternly to us, "not a word of this until I have reached a decision."

LATE that afternoon Rodenbach returned from a hunting trip with a young reitbok and disquieting news. He had seen a native watching him. The man had appeared out of the nowhere with the same subtle mysteriousness as the Gurmas had vanished from the camp site when I had retrieved Müller's book. Now Rodenbach's porters were more agitated than before. They sensed that we were being followed. And if the Gurmas did not strike it was because they wanted first to jockey us into some sort of a position more favorable to them. Perhaps we were not yet far enough in the jungle. Perhaps they were waiting for reinforcements from other villages and meanwhile were not letting us escape from their sight. Perhaps many things—but the fact remained that all the time we had been so sure of our safety we were under mysterious surveillance from the solitude around us.

This news coupled with what Rodenbach, Von Harden, and I knew about the situation gave us more cause for concern. It was disquieting, but it must be faced. It was as though a net were slowly closing around us. Sinister and ominous, it was closing inch by inch, yet we could not reach out and touch it. It was there, but it was not visible. And it was not conducive to settled nerves. We wondered whether the porters knew of the reward for us. We ques-

tioned that they did not, for there was little going on in officialdom in Togoland, or anywhere along the coast in those days, that was not known by the servant almost as quickly as by the master. The blacks had a highly developed intuition to know nothing and yet know everything. But in our own case—we wondered.

The discovery of the mysterious watcher threw them into a panic. The man had disappeared immediately on being discovered, which added to their fright. Their jabberings were low-toned, yet intense. Trouble was brewing.

The blacks were deathly afraid of the Gurmas, and wherever I went about the camp, wherever Von Harden went, crowds of them found some excuse to be near us. This constant presence so infuriated Herr Major that on a sudden he lashed out with his riding crop.

"Keep away from me, you helpless black swine," he shouted. That did not help matters. I thought that it gave us away. They knew now, I was sure.

That night he limited our fires to four. Rodenbach and I, cognizant of our new situation, backed him up. The protests of the porters were useless. Worse still, I saw that they had begun to turn against me when their appeals fell on my deaf ears. It was as though their last hope were deserting them.

"I will keep guard tonight," Von Harden said. "Tell them that nobody is to leave camp on any pretext."

They took the order with sullen, downcast eyes, quaking, many of them, in their tracks. They were eighty, and we were four, yet they were true Africans; in their moment of peril they looked to us for deliverance.

Once their prattle had died down that night, I went to see Müller.

He was ready for me. "What is going on?" was the first thing he said. "What has happened? There is a strange air about everything today. Why? Fritz, tell me. I know something is wrong. Tell me . . ."

I did. I told him the entire story. I was taking the situation into my own hands, for I did not agree with Von Harden that he should be kept in darkness concerning our plight. I had determined to tell him, let come what may, for I believed that he should know. Who could tell?—perhaps he would offer the plan of escape. Furthermore, I owed him a debt. I thought of his confession to me on the train. He had confided in me. I would confide in him.

In the telling I saw him grow deathly white. He interrupted me a dozen times with wrenching coughing spells that added to my fears. His pneumonia, his sprained ankle were not enough. Now he had something further. How could we get him out of the jungle? We could not have him carried along the difficult trail that lay ahead. The trail behind us we had to avoid for our own safety.

I was in a quandary, and I found myself shaking from head to foot. I had wanted adventure—well, here it was. More than I ever had anticipated. I wanted to be a spy—well, now I was one. And with a price on my head. I cursed the day I had let my youth run away with me. Lome, with all its sun, its languidity, was a godsend to the hell that surrounded me. For days now we hadn't seen the sun. Nothing but the wet fog that hemmed us in—creepers overhead, green walls on every side, quiet, menacing, and

voiceless. Two days before, I had started on my reserve pair of sneakers. A fresh pair before them had come apart in my hands a week after they had first been worn. Rodenbach was wearing my reserve coat. His clothes had moulded beyond saving. We had eaten nothing but freshly killed game for days. I dreamed of milk and vegetables.

Our nerves were not what they should have been. On several occasions I had found myself rowing with the servant over nothing. The way my blanket was tucked in; my tent was not brushed out sufficiently. It was the jungle. It was getting me. It was getting all of us. We were irritable beyond reason. I wished to God I knew what was ahead. I wished the Gurmas would come out and fight us. I wished we knew where we stood. Meanwhile we could not escape the wet fog—a wall more heartless, more inescapable than any prison could boast. We were being tortured in hell.

As I left Müller I saw Von Harden's white uniform coat. He was sitting in his canvas chair at one edge of the clearing, a faint gray spot in the darkness. Across his knees lay his rifle. His pistol hung about his waist within easy reach. He was smoking a cigarette, and I saw that in the darkness he had thrown his hammock netting over his head. It fell down over his cap and protected his face. It was a gesture that made me wonder if he were cracking too. Never before had he compromised. I crossed over and spoke to him. I knew he had seen me come out of Müller's tent. I wondered what he thought.

"Everything quiet?" I asked nervously.

He made no reply. He only looked up and smiled at me.

Then he looked toward Müller's tent. Again his eyes found mine, and again he smiled, enigmatically, half sneeringly. I didn't want to get in a conversation with him. I left him hastily and sought my hammock. Once I was beneath my blankets I prayed for the first time in years. I asked God to show us a way out. I bared my soul to him. You may say I was a coward, but I was afraid. I was thoroughly scared, and scared men do anything.

How long I pitched and rolled about I don't know, but I was awakened by something that made me spring out of my hammock and reach for my rifle.

Outside I heard running footsteps. I heard a voice in German. Suddenly there was a terrific jabbering among the porters. I had been right. I had heard a shot. I opened my tent flap and looked out.

There was a commotion off to my left. I looked toward the spot where Von Harden had been sitting. His chair was there, but it was empty. Across the clearing I saw Rodenbach's tent flap move. I watched and saw it half open. Then he stepped out in his bare feet. He was stark naked, putting on his glasses with one hand. His rifle was in the other. He ran off suddenly to my left.

I thrust my head out farther, and by the light of a dying fire saw a huddled group of black bodies. Above the confusion I could hear a voice: "Get out, you swine, get out."

I stepped into the clearing and found him leading the shouting procession. He was pulling something toward the fire. A native suddenly kicked it into a blaze. By its light I saw that what Von Harden had was not an animal, as I

expected, but something black and glistening. I knew . . . he had shot an eavesdropper. Our war on the Gurmas was started. It was something of a relief. Now my worries could take concrete form. The mystery was no more. For the first time in days I felt a pang of happiness. It was a relief to be sure. The hesitancy, the worry were over. A soldier will know what I mean. War had been declared.

I stepped out into the clearing and ran toward them. Von Harden was leading the way, pulling the inert body forward. Behind him was Rodenbach, his long, bony form grotesque and strange in its nakedness. I went up to them and said something to Von Harden—what, I don't know. He didn't hear me. His pistol was in his free hand.

As they reached the fire the gabble behind them swelled to a crescendo. Once the body was in the light it became hell let loose. I looked down and saw why. The man he had shot was not a Gurma!

He was one of our porters.

"What? Why? How?" I don't know what I said. I recall only that Rodenbach was pushed against me as the porters crowded up to get a closer look. He was swearing at Von Harden, who was paying no attention.

"He was trying to desert," I heard the gruff voice. "Three others were with him. The others got away. This will teach them to obey." There was much more. I couldn't hear it. I knew that again Von Harden had been guilty of an overt act. He had sealed our doom. The last thing he should have done was shoot a porter, regardless of the crime.

I left them squabbling there and returned to my tent, my mind in a jumble. The last thing I heard was Von Harden's voice. He was talking to Rodenbach.

"I'm in charge of this camp. I'll take the responsibility. You tell them I'll shoot the next one that tries to get away. I'll shoot them all if I have to. Tell them that, go on, tell them that."

"You goddamned swine," I heard Rodenbach. "You've done for us now."

Von Harden's answer was a mocking laugh.

Back in my tent I could not sleep. I was so nervous, I got up and cleaned my rifle. I was too nervous even to think of hating Von Harden. I opened my boxes and counted my ammunition. It was a foolish gesture, but I had to do something. I didn't want to think. When morning came I found I had 280 bullets for my Jefferies and 460 for my Winchester 30-30. There was an endless number for the pistols.

I started to count all over again when Von Harden suddenly thrust his head in upon me.

"Come into my tent," he said. "We've got to talk this thing over." The sight of him changed everything. I was myself again. So now he would talk over his mistakes. He was changing. I hoped he wouldn't change too much. I wanted him.

Outside, the porters were still jabbering, arguing over the tragedy of the night. I spoke to Soko, but whether by design or accident, he did not answer. Instead he glowered at me. Nervously and with misgivings I entered Von Harden's tent. Rodenbach was already there. His face was

flushed, and I saw his pistol at his waist. That told me how he felt.

"I did it because it was the only thing to do, and that is the end of it." Von Harden ignored my entrance. "We will have no more talk about it. What we must consider now," he continued, "is how we are to get out of this predicament."

"The predicament you got us into," Rodenbach interrupted.

"Silence!" He screamed it at the top of his voice. "Enough! Silence!"

On noticing me his anger dimmed. He smiled sardonically, paused a moment, and lit a cigarette. His hand was steady and firm. He cleared his throat once or twice and took out his eyeglass.

"Now," he said, reaching for his handkerchief, "we'll be sensible. We've got to consider getting out. The work is finished. The only weak link in our chain is Müller. . . ."

I didn't hear what followed, for my attention had been distracted by a movement of the tent flap. I looked toward it and saw a white, pudgy hand grasp it, slowly pull it open. With a quick gesture Von Harden's eyes shot in the same direction. I saw him watching intently, his voice hesitating, talking generalities. His face was grim, his chin out.

On the instant the hand appeared his voice rose. He smiled again. "The weak link in our chain," he repeated clearly, "is Müller. Without him our position would not be so difficult."

The tent flap came back, and what I feared happened.

Müller thrust his head in. Tears were coursing down his cheeks. His mouth hung open, his look was of a dumb animal in pain. He had heard.

"Oh, Herr Doktor," Von Harden said quickly, casually, "come in. We are having a talk. Come in." He smiled and motioned to his camp chair. "Sit down, Herr Doktor." I had never seen such a change in him. He was all smiles, concerned in Müller's welfare. He was a different person.

Müller fell into the seat with a groan. Von Harden polished his monocle, screwed it back into his eye, and resumed the conversation. Rodenbach sat tugging at his mustaches and watching him like a hawk. He had missed nothing. His thick glasses were no barrier. I thought a faint smile was at the corners of his mouth. He never took his eyes off Herr Major. He had read him as though he were an open book.

For the remainder of the "conference" Von Harden was more reasonable, reasonable for Von Harden—he let us say something.

Müller sat through it, swathed in a blanket, spitting into what had once been a white handkerchief. Frequently he sighed and wiped at the tears he took no effort to hide. His helmet was askew, one foot was naked, and the other had an unlaced shoe. He hadn't shaved for days. His cheek bones were too prominent, his mouth was open, and I saw his chin twitching. I watched him several moments, and the twitching did not stop. He shifted about nervously. I took Von Harden's pillow and put it behind his back. He tried to thank me, but the words wouldn't come. He

was completely done in. I thought he was on the verge of a paralytic stroke.

Rodenbach never took his eyes from Von Harden, who was making no attempt to hide the smile on his face. I had been looking everywhere, mostly at Müller. I was never so worried about him.

When the conference broke up we had accomplished what might have been expected—nothing.

Rodenbach was for going back along the trail until we reached the open country, then striking straight east to the headwaters of the Oti. There we could float south into Togoland. I wasn't of much use to them; I had no suggestions. Von Harden could not reach a decision.

"We will wait here a day or two until I decide," he finally announced. "Here we are safe so far. With eighty—ah, no," he suddenly checked himself, smiling, "with seventy-seven porters, we are a formidable force. Yes, we will wait here."

When we got out, I helped Müller to his tent. It occurred to me on the way that we had never mentioned to him the closing of the border against us. Somehow Von Harden seemed to have taken it for granted that he knew. I wondered if he had heard me explaining our position to Müller the night before in his tent.

Leaving him, I noticed that the porters were about the camp, less noisy than before our conference. I saw that their eyes were downcast, they had ceased even to mutter among themselves. Something seemed to grip at my heart, and I called for Soko. He was not present. No one knew

where he was. The answers I got were brief and reluctantly given. My worst fears were being confirmed.

"Rodenbach, Rodenbach," I called.

He came out, and I told him of my doubts. We lined the men up and counted them. There were sixty-eight present. The others had disappeared either during the night or while we were in conference. With them went their boxes.

I referred to my lists and found we had lost five bolts of badly needed netting, one hundred pounds of salt, five cartons of matches, most of our medicine supply, and the few remaining tins of concentrated food.

Then I went in search of Von Harden. He was not in his own tent. I looked in Müller's, interrupting him in the writing of something he hastily thrust under his blanket.

"Please, Fritz," he said nervously, the words stumbling and halting, "leave me alone a minute." His chin was twitching worse than before; he looked wan and shriveled. His fat little body was lost in the folds of his blanket.

Von Harden was on the outskirts of the clearing directing a group of men to bury the unfortunate he had killed. When I told him what had happened his expression never changed.

"Get my light rifle," he directed one of the men.

Then suddenly he checked himself. "Now," he said, turning to me, "here is where Müller can help us." He was smiling again, the same sardonic smile I had seen at the conference.

I followed him back to his tent. He brought out his camp chair and pillow. Then we helped Müller out of his tent. Von Harden took him by one shoulder and I by the other,

and we supported him to the chair. Suddenly Von Harden produced a pistol and passed it to him.

"Now, Herr Doktor," he said, smiling again, "you sit here until we come back. We won't be long. Your job is to shoot the first nigger you see trying to get away."

Müller looked up incredulously and tried to blubber a reply. But before he could say anything I was following Von Harden back to the grave-diggers where we rejoined Rodenbach. He hadn't been with us. He didn't know of Müller's guardianship.

"Now," Von Harden said, leading the way, "I'll kill a few more niggers. I'll teach them yet who is giving orders."

A strange sound seemed to float back from him as he started ahead, and for a moment I thought he was whistling. Then I recalled that he'd never whistled before.

**A**N HOUR later we gave up the chase. We had gone more than three kilometers back on the trail without seeing a vestige of the men. They had vanished into the mysterious solitude.

"We'll never find them," Rodenbach and I finally convinced Von Harden. "They can slip through this jungle without leaving a trace."

"Will they get back to their damned bush?" he asked us smilingly.

"Certainly they'll get back," Rodenbach told him. "The Gurmas can't follow them as easily as they can trail us. We're in for it now."

"So you've said before," Von Harden answered. "Well, let's get back. Our problem seems to be simplifying itself." He was as casual as though he had lost his way in a Berlin suburb. "What's done is done."

Rodenbach began arguing with him, but he paid no attention. He started back toward the camp at a steady lope. We followed, rowing with each other.

Some distance on the way we heard a shot. It caused us to pause and listen.

"Müller's done for one of them," he said. "The old woman might be of some use after all."

"He's no old woman if he's treated right," I replied,

but he hadn't heard me. He was off again, running along trees, dashing through bush patches and plunging ahead.

Back at the camp we found another mêlée. The natives were crowded together, jabbering and whimpering off to one side. Von Harden pushed his way through them.

"My God!" I heard him say.

Rodenbach and I were close behind. When we got to the center we found the cause of the commotion. Müller was sprawled on the ground, a grotesque mass that made me leap down beside him. I saw that he was beyond help. The side of his head was a jagged red mass. In one hand I saw Von Harden's heavy pistol.

One arm was buckled under him. I rolled him over and found an envelope in his other hand. I was reaching for it when Von Harden sprang down beside me and snatched it away before I could read the name on it.

I heard him tearing it open. I was thinking of poor Müller and all he had been through. I saw him again that day in the train below Atakpame. A dozen memories came flooding back. I heard his rippling laugh. I recalled his fat stomach as I had rubbed it with liniment. I saw him again coming into Von Harden's tent that morning, and I recalled the satanic voice repeating for his hearing, "The weak link in our chain is Müller. Without him our position would not be so difficult."

Something touched my shoulder, and through dimmed eyes I looked up. Von Harden was passing me the note. I took it and read it three times before I could comprehend.

I can repeat it from memory.

DEAR HERR MAJOR [it said]:

*I am aware that I am an obstacle. I am deeply sorry for the trouble I have caused you. Now that my work is finished I am happy to be an obstacle no longer. You will find my report is complete. My last request is that you see it arrives safely in Berlin. I am removing myself as an obstacle to you for the glory of the Fatherland. Good-bye to Herr Rodenbach and my good friend Fritz. I die for the Fatherland.*

Slowly I got to my feet. Rodenbach was reading the note. Von Harden was standing beside me. I looked at him and found him half smiling. "Now our problem is not so difficult," he said.

He was going on when something seemed to grip me. A new kind of energy seemed to flow through my veins. I felt my muscles tighten, and I thrilled all over. It was a feeling I had never before experienced. I cannot describe it correctly; I doubt that it can be described.

I heard him say, "The surv'val of the . . ." when something snapped within me. His half-cynical face was close to me. Through a blur I saw his jaunty cap, his insolent monocle. He was casually slapping at an insect with his damnable riding crop.

My right hand came up from my side. I smashed him full in the face. I sensed that his knees were buckling. He became a blurred vision on the ground. The natives screamed, and I saw Rodenbach hastily look up from the message. But my mind was centered on the man at my feet.

I recall that I screamed invectives at him. Suddenly I felt Rodenbach's long, sinewy arms around me.

"No, no, Fritz," he was shouting. "Not that. We've got to stick together now. We need each other. . . ."

As he was dragging me away I saw something glistening below me on the ground. It was Herr Major's monocle. I had knocked it out of his eye. The sight of it gave me fresh strength. It represented all he stood for; it was symbolic of everything that was Von Harden. I ground it under my heel and exulted when it broke in a thousand pieces. It was as though I had ground my heel in his red, blotched face.

Then suddenly I saw him back there on the ground. He was attempting to rise. I saw him reaching for his pistol.

I crossed the intervening space with one bound. His chin was on a level with my knee. I smashed him again with my right hand, and as I drew it back I saw it was covered with blood. He was over on his back, and I struck him a third time when again Rodenbach's arm pinioned me. He was shouting something I couldn't hear. I saw the blacks running away in a frenzy. I must have been out of my head, but the sight of Von Harden's blood on my hand was the most satisfactory sight I had known since the trip started. I was my own master now. I was conscious of my own strength. Von Harden's reign was ended.

"I'll get you yet, you murderer," I shouted back. "I'll never leave you now. You'll come to me yet and beg for help."

Rodenbach dragged me away. I was laughing hysterically.

**I**N THE same way I hated Von Harden yet appreciated that he was indispensable to the saving of my life, so I hated the jungle yet was thankful for its presence. Vast and awe-inspiring, hushed and beatific like a cathedral in the dead of night, it was a fitting sepulchre in which to leave the peaceful Müller, who would no more be upset by our constant rows.

We wrapped him in a German flag, sewed him securely in his heavy tent, and buried him in a grave the porters had dug at the edge of the clearing. What service we had was brief yet as complete as the exigency would allow. No one had a Bible. Von Harden recalled a portion of the military burial, and I could remember only a droning prayer I had heard in a Presbyterian mission in the Kammeruns. It was in Eewee, which I thought especially appropriate.

With a verse of "Die Wacht am Rhein," fat little Müller was lowered out of sight.

I doubted, as I watched him disappear, that the jungle had ever witnessed a stranger drama than that in which we three decrepit white men played leading rôles. We were bareheaded. Our clothes had become rags. Our stomachs were empty.

And I took it as an omen of no good that we were interrupted by the briefest of noises in the maze of tangled creepers overhead. Looking up I saw a monkey flitting from one limb to another, pausing momentarily to peer down at us. I felt rather than knew that a thousand other eyes were hovering near, calculating our strength, estimating our power of resistance. If not from the animal world, I feared our doom would come perhaps from the very world of which we were a part—for behind us the porters milled about restlessly, whispering and nudging.

Gradually I brought myself to a happier frame of mind. It was no time for pessimism.

I looked at Von Harden and found that, though his head was bowed, he was looking intently at his trouser leg, and I surmised the reason. He confirmed my suspicion when his hand went down and pulled at the cloth. The stout material gave away, and it split down the leg. I had a further example of the destructive power of the jungle. Would it get us yet? In what order? What lay ahead? Who would go first, or would we all go at once?

I doubted that Von Harden would be the first, for even while we were mourning Müller's passing, he was improving the time, if only to discover that his equipment was rotting.

When the grave was being filled, I seized upon the opportunity to shake myself out of my morbidity. I took Rodenbach aside and induced him to join me in gathering flowers as a final tribute—flowers that within an hour of their plucking would be withering like everything else in the lost world that embraced us.

Tuberose, jasmine, and others, but mostly orchids, heavy and deadening to the senses—we threw many on the grave. We picked them where they grew around us in such riotous profusion that their odor became offensive.

I cannot go into a florist's now to buy them without becoming nauseated, possibly because of the price, more probably because of the many I uprooted and cast on Müller's grave. The smell of them brings me back again to that jungle hell on the Niger where we saw the last of the good-natured botanist who had been an indispensable adjunct to the expedition.

Von Harden did not help us. Immediately the first spadeful of earth had fallen into the grave he left us for his tent, and we did not see him for hours. I was just as well pleased. I wanted to avoid him. For I had a clearer conception of the part I had played in the episode of the previous day, and I was doubtful if my conduct was as praiseworthy as it had seemed at the time.

All I had done was make a fool of myself. I had not hurt him in the least, and I questioned that my physical superiority had quenched his indomitable spirit. What blood he had shed came only from his nose, a common nosebleed such as might be received on a football field.

Therefore, unless I had downed his everlasting air of patronizing dictation, unless I had pricked his bubble and shown him that he was not the godhead he suspected, I had accomplished nothing and lost much. As a diplomat I was a flat failure. I had shown only that I could hit him when he was down, and I had given myself away. The entire episode was little to my credit. My only defense is that

I was young and impulsive and that I wanted to avenge Müller.

To Rodenbach, Müller was the one that emerged out of it all, not Von Harden or myself.

"He knew we couldn't get out with him," he said. "He knew that if we lingered because of him we were done. He did the only thing to do. He did it for the Fatherland as surely as any soldier ever laid down his life on the battle-field. He was a courageous man."

"He also brought about the end of Von Harden's domineering," I put in hopefully.

Rodenbach was not of the same mind. He looked at me sharply.

"What do you mean? That foolishness of yours?" His face was wrinkled, and he was peering at me through his thick glasses.

"Yes." I felt my breath catch on the word. I wanted his approbation; instead I got his shrewd evaluation.

"You think he's finished, do you?" he said. "Well, I don't. All you did was hit him when he was down."

"Perhaps, but he practically forced Müller to kill himself," I retorted. "You heard what he said in the tent: 'The weak link in our chain is Müller. Without him our position would not be so difficult'—you heard him say that. He let Müller hear it—then he gave him his pistol."

"Maybe," he came back deprecatingly, "but Müller would have killed himself in any event. If his mind was running in that channel, he'd have found some way to do it. For all his braggadocio, Von Harden has brains. We've got to have him with us. Can't you see that?"

We were lingering by the grave after the impromptu funeral. We were alone, save for the few porters who hung around us whispering and sullen, not letting us out of their sight. Wherever we went someone was close at hand. At first I thought it was because of their fear of the jungle; later I learned the real reason.

"Well," I said, "I've defied Von Harden after all. He won't be so damned important after this. He won't be . . ." I knew what I wanted to say, but I couldn't put it into words. "He won't be so . . ." I fumbled, and Rodenbach broke in:

"Bosh! Because you struck him when he was on the ground? You think that by hitting him you've solved our problem. You haven't. That was the one thing you shouldn't have done. Müller was dead. You couldn't have brought him back. It was a time to be cool and plan our escape. Instead of that you got heroic. You haven't helped either of us. We've got to have Von Harden with us. I don't like him any more than you do, but he means another gun—and such a gun! This is no time to pick fights. We must have unity or we're lost. . . ."

"Oh, twaddle," I said. "He killed my best friend, and I let him have it. I'm not sorry. I mean I am—and I'm not. I'm glad I struck him; and yet I wish I hadn't. Oh! . . . I don't know! . . ."

"You may be stronger than he is," Rodenbach summed up, "but if you think muscle is all that's needed, you're wrong. He's got brains under that damned military cap. And he's not downed yet. You watch."

When we got back to the center of the clearing I called

for my tent servant. He did not respond. I shouted for the cook—he also was absent. I was suspicious and turned suddenly on a trio who had been following me. They shuffled off with mutters and shifting eyes.

I sent for Rodenbach, and we counted the men again. We had sixty-three. Before the funeral we had had sixty-eight. They seemed to disappear while we were lining them up. They went from under our eyes; they went when our backs were turned. One step out of the clearing, and they were lost in the mysterious solitude.

Rodenbach stayed up that night with a rifle across his knees, vowing that he would kill the first black to stir from within their ring of fires. When morning came he swore with pride and finality that none had gotten away—but they had. When we counted them—forty-nine remained.

The second night Von Harden confined them inside a stockade he had forced them to build. Two disappeared while they were building it. It was nine feet tall and had one outlet. Von Harden sat before it, and as they filed in we counted forty-one men. In the morning thirty-two came out. It was inexplicable.

Only the first ones to desert us took their boxes. These latter escapers left theirs behind, but every one of them took something he could carry in his hands. Now it was too late. The harm had already been done. Strangely enough, they left our rifles and ammunition intact. We lost all our personal belongings. Our three shaving kits went the first day. Later pencils were gone, a half-dozen handkerchiefs I had; someone carried off the three spades after

the funeral. They were children. They took what pleased their fancy.

The one who took our medicine cabinet I am sure had no ulterior motive. It was simply that he was starting on another march, and the box had been a part of him for so long that he did not know how to move without it. Such psychology is typical of the African natives, particularly the Konkombwas. He might go two days back on the trail before it would dawn on him that he could move faster without the box and that it contained nothing to which he attached any value. Then he would unceremoniously throw it in the bush and continue.

It would have been useless for us to go back as searchers. The jungle was too vast. Anything they might throw two feet off the trail would be swallowed up in the rank foliage and within twenty-four hours would be destroyed by ants.

By an anomaly that convinced me he was in league with the devil, Von Harden appeared the second day with a monocle.

"I didn't know I had it," I heard him telling Rodenbach, overloud for my benefit, I liked to think. "The beggar brought it to light going through my effects."

Rodenbach doubled up with laughter. I walked away pretending I had not heard.

By a similarly strange fate they left me the quart bottle of castor oil out of which I had dosed Müller. One quart of castor oil—and what was ahead? I hated to think.

The upshot was that we stayed three days in that camp after Müller's death. Three days of fretful worry. Three days during each of which the few remaining faithful would

come back with word they had seen Gurmas watching us. Two hours later the informers would be gone.

The last afternoon we heard an unmistakable war drum. That brought on the stampede.

Von Harden had taken five men out on a search for wood for the night's fire. In the dense underbrush it was impossible to watch them all. When he rounded them up they were three. When word of the Gurma surveillance reached us we had nineteen men. That night Rodenbach and I sat around the stockade until midnight, when Herr Major relieved us. In the morning six had flown.

It was uncanny, yet it was true. I would like to lay it to African *gris-gris*, only I'd be laughed at. Yet they melted into thin air. We saw what was coming, yet we had no power to stop it. All we could do was to look on.

**I**T WAS not that they meant to be unfaithful to us, it was not so much that they hated or feared Von Harden. It was primarily that they were creatures of the moods and whims of the jungle and, like children, once they were frightened, their first recourse was flight. They were homesick and scared, and the combination was too much. All the threats we might make were futile. With us they were in unfamiliar territory, but in the jungle they were at home. They could not understand three grimy white men having palavers every half hour and arguing over maps. In the Gurma bush there was trouble, in the Konkombwa bush there was none. The answer was simple, even for their elementary intellects.

It is trite to say we should have pleaded with them. We did. We promised them lifelong freedom from taxes if they stayed, we threatened them with lifelong chains if they fled. Nothing availed. The Konkombwa territory is wide, and they were smart enough to know it. They could leave Togoland and throw up their bush shacks in Upper Dahomey under the French, or in the Northern Territories under the British.

We had lost our power over them, or better still, we had been superseded by a power they held in greater awe—the jungle. Our guns meant nothing. I am convinced

they had a rendezvous somewhere back along the trail. Seventy-odd men well armed with poisoned arrows, and not encumbered by the tell-tale evidences of white men, would be a formidable force for the Gurmas to attack. They were reasonably sure of getting back.

"Well, they've gone," Von Harden said simply the third day. "They walked out from under your eyes, you African experts! We haven't a nigger left!"

Rodenbach looked at me and nodded. I said nothing.

It was the first time Von Harden had spoken to me since I had knocked him down. There was sarcasm in his tone rather than malice or reprisal. Rodenbach had made me see the view Herr Major most likely would take of the affair. The summary was that I was the loser on two counts, first because I had struck an officer (the fact that I was not in the army made no difference) and, secondly, because I had struck him when he was down—I was not a gentleman. Any argument that I punched him because he was drawing his pistol was thrown out by Rodenbach, who said it was his opinion that Von Harden's hand was going to his side to ease the pain of his boils. The enormity of my crime was thus doubled. By the army code I knew that Von Harden would have been justified in putting me in irons—if we had irons. We hadn't. Instead he waited, watched, and said nothing to me. Nor did I take the initiative. The first day was not so bad, but the third day it began to get on my nerves, also on Rodenbach's.

We three white men lost in the jungle went to sleep with our hands on our pistols; we suspected each other and, beneath it all, despite my friendship with the geologist,

I think we hated each other. It was a hatred that the jungle nurtured, brought to fulfilment and made keen. It was as though the jungle were going to make us beat ourselves.

But now that Von Harden had spoken to me, I knew the waiting was over. It was as though he had declared himself. And the way in which he had done it took me somewhat aback. For I had determined the first day to step into the rôle from which I had deposed him. I would take the reins of leadership and let him fall back into the rut where I had wallowed. Now he would take my insolence, he would be the butt of my sarcasm.

But something made me pause before asserting myself—a vague premonition, a half desire to rub salt on his wounds, and something else that I cannot put into words. I had known the same feeling that day at Atakpame when he had given the crazy order to start overland in the middle of the day. I wanted to fight him then, when something held me back. Something in his tone, his manner, perhaps. I felt it now coming over me, and my firm resolutions to put him in his place the first time he spoke to me vanished in the air. I determined to wait. I would let him assert himself, then crush him. Rodenbach's championing of Von Harden's cause and his desertion of mine I reluctantly admitted was not heartening. For I knew Rodenbach was right. As much as I hated Von Harden, I had to admit he had brains.

We sat in the middle of the camp that third morning and looked at ourselves and our surroundings. Our boxes stood around us, three tents, other of our equipment; and

off in a corner of the clearing lay Müller—at least his worries were over. As Von Harden came out of his tent and spoke to us I noted that he had a dark stubble of beard and that his trouser leg was patched where he had torn the rotting cloth apart at the funeral. His cap was soggy and limp and the white coat was now a dismal gray. But in his eye was the damnable monocle and tap-tapping against his leg was the familiar riding crop. His face was bloated by insect bites, but he smiled down at us.

Sauntering around the clearing, he flicked at the dun-nage with his riding crop. After he had completed the circuit he went to the center, cleared his throat and spat. Then he came over to us.

"Now," I said to myself, "it's coming. Here's where I put you down once and for all. This time you won't get up."

"The problem," he said, looking down at us offhandedly, after he had painstakingly polished his monocle, "is getting out. It is something of a relief not to have any damned niggers to worry about."

I felt myself smiling. Was he trying to bluff me with his old-time nonchalance, or was it—and the thought came to me with something of a shock—that he hadn't changed a particle? Had I, as Rodenbach said and I had sometimes suspected, only made a fool of myself by knocking him down? He seemed perfectly at ease.

"Come into my tent," he said, "and let's look at the maps. It's time we reached a decision." That was where I had him. "It's time to reach a decision," gave him away. It was not the more customary "I'll decide," but "we." I

looked at Rodenbach, but he was absorbed in peering after the retreating figure.

"Come on," I said, "he's bluffing." He got up, and we followed the tight-fitting military coat, now displaying a large section of flesh underneath through a tear in a seam.

A map of the district was spread open on Von Harden's folding table. It was as complete as any available in 1911. Rodenbach and I studied it for several minutes while Von Harden paced the floor behind us. Finally he spoke:

"What do you think, Herr Doktor?" He stopped and stood with his feet braced wide apart, his hands clasped behind him.

"My idea," Rodenbach said, after a moment, "is that we should head straight west to the upper reaches of the White Volta. Then we can float down into Togoland."

"Ah." Von Harden's broad grin broadened, and he turned to me. "And you?"

I spent some time tracing the various rivers in the district. I saw that if we followed Rodenbach's plan we should have to pass through the Mossi country, and the Mossis have never been partial to the exponents of Kultur. I doubted, furthermore, that we could cover such a distance without disaster. I measured the distance to the river and found it to be approximately four hundred kilometers in a straight line. By the circuitous route we would be forced to take it would be some five hundred or five hundred and fifty. It seemed an impossible journey for three fugitives.

Closer to hand were the headwaters of the Oti, southwest, back over much of the trail we had covered. It continued south but east of the White Volta to Togoland and

the Dahomey border. The country there was inhabited by the Borgus, and they also hated all that Kultur stood for. Many of them had been driven out of Togoland by the army colonizers. They would make short shift of us. And if they failed we still would have the natives of Dahomey to contend with: at that time many of them were human-flesh eaters. The prospect did not look good, but it looked better than starting through unknown country to the White Volta. At least we would be in familiar territory.

I think what attracted each of us most was the prospect of stealing a canoe and floating to safety. Most of the natives either way we might go would be armed with arrows and spears, very few had rifles. The Oti was nearer, it meant a trek of 300 kilometers. I offered it as my choice.

All the while Von Harden had retained his smile. I told him of the Borgus and the Mossi. Rodenbach added his bit. It was no time to avoid the truth. Von Harden listened with a trace of amusement, and it came to me that he had something up his sleeve. He had.

"I don't think much of you African experts," he said when we had finished. "I don't think you know much of military tactics. Now, let us put ourselves in the place of the British and French authorities. I think it safe to assume that they will reason the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. That means, then, that they will expect us to head straight for the Togoland border. Hence their utmost vigilance will be exerted in that direction, the direction you experts think we should take."

His familiar sarcasm was coming out, and with it his satanic grin. I looked at Rodenbach with an idea that I

'would interrupt Von Harden and in so doing enlist his aid, but he was holding his chin in his hands and peering at our strategist. Without shifting his eyes he knew I had looked at him, and when Von Harden stopped to pick up a pencil Rodenbach spoke to me *sotto voce* out of the corner of his mouth.

"He's got something," he said. "You listen."

I don't believe Von Harden heard him, but if he did there was no suggestion of triumph as he continued.

"Now, you think we should go back through the country where the natives and foreign police are most anxiously looking for us. I don't. I think our only course lies in surprising them, taking them unawares. We should do what they least expect us to do. That, you see, is one way of reasoning that a military school will teach you. But you gentlemen, I'm sorry to say, have never had military training. Therefore my plan is that we should strike straight north, avoid Timbuctoo, and get into the desert."

"But," I interrupted, unable to restrain myself longer for here was another of his crazy ideas, "if you go north you're striking still farther into French territory. If we're in trouble now, let's get out, don't let us get in deeper." Rodenbach put his hand on my arm.

Von Harden looked at me a moment, and I thought he would lapse into one of his old withering tirades, but suddenly his smile came back, more condescending than before. He made a mocking bow toward me.

"Precisely," he said, "the way to get out of trouble in this instance is to get deeper into it. To the north they won't be watching for us. To the south they will. Up there

"we will pass for hunters," he waved his hand airily, "or traders, perhaps——"

"Hunters or traders in the Sahara," I broke in, laughing, "without a caravan, without a servant of any kind, without even food? It's preposterous. They'd be suspicious of us in a minute."

He heard me out before answering. When he did, his voice was cool and collected, with a faint trace of disparagement. "Nagel," he said, "you have no imagination. Perhaps that's why you're a head porter. These things you speak of are details, and details worry small men."

His words were slowly spoken, and I looked up flushing from the maps to find him putting a wax-covered match to a cigarette. At the first strain of his breath against the paper, the cigarette crumbled over the front of his uniform. Quite casually he shook out the match, looked at the loose tobacco on the floor, then smiled benignly at me. His entire gesture had been unconcerned, and I visioned him in the Uhlans Club in Berlin, monarch of all he surveyed and contemptuous of every other mortal on earth.

Suddenly I had a new interest. A miracle had been performed. I looked at him with bulging eyes.

"The matches," I shot at him, "the matches. Where did you get them? Did they leave them?"

"Ah," he answered, "Von Krocke's expert wants to know about the matches." He smiled broadly, thrust his hands in his pockets, and stalked about the narrow tent. "No, they didn't leave them," he said after a moment. "I've been sleeping on them for two weeks."

"Sleeping on them? . . ."

"I didn't trust the niggers you love so much," he finished.

"A pity you didn't sleep on some food too," I put in, chagrined.

"I did, but it spoiled."

I wanted no more of the conversation, and I turned again to the maps. Rodenbach was poring over them. He uncovered one of the whole of Africa. On it I traced his route and the one I had suggested. They seemed the simplest to me.

Then I followed the mythical course Von Harden had broached. I saw Timbuctoo ahead of us; that meant a French garrison and the center of an espionage corps second to none. They knew the story of every foreigner in the French Sudan. Crossing the Niger meant coming up against that very efficient French naval patrol of gunboats on the river, gunboats that could never reach the sea. Granting that we should ever see the Sahara, I visioned the endless kilometers of blistering hot sand, the sandstorms, our ignorance of waterholes. . . . My mind was in a maze of questions. Was he going to cross the Sahara on foot? I thought now that the jungle had him, that he was demented, and with the cunning of the mentally unbalanced was tantalizing us. And after the Sahara, what? I laughed out and slapped my leg.

"We three poverty-stricken whites," I said, "without a thing in the way of equipment, all we have is what we stand in and our rifles, we can't take any of that stuff outside. We don't know where our next meal is coming from, we don't know how much longer we'll be lost in this

hellish jungle, we don't know but that at this very minute the Gurmas may have a flock of bows and poisoned arrows trained at this tent flap as we go out, and you airily propose that we start out across the Sahara. . . .”

Von Harden's smile had increased as my voice rose. “And you,” he said easily, “you were the one who wanted adventure, you're the youngest of us, and you're—you're afraid, perhaps?”

“Like hell I am!” I shot at him. “I'm not afraid, I only think you're crazy.” I looked at Rodenbach and found him staring intently at the side of the tent.

“It's the most audacious thing I ever heard,” I said.

“Precisely,” Von Harden broke in. “Because of its audacity it will win for us. The best defense is always an attack.”

I looked down again at the map. Above El Juf I saw the border of Morocco. “But then we'll be heading into Morocco,” I said. “The French are already there, and you propose we go there. What do you want to do—fight them, carry on a war of our own on the 40,000 French troops Lyautey has in Fez?”

He smiled again. “Just that,” he said. “The natives on the desert are French by force, not by inclination. They only need a little waking up, a little expert handling, to start a series of guerilla wars against the French, and once they do, 40,000 seasoned troops won't be half enough.”

“You're going to fight the French?” My words came stumbling out in confusion.

“Yes,” he said calmly. “I'm going to fight the French. With the help of the Tuaregs, perhaps the best fighters in

the desert, certainly the bravest. Don't forget, they have never forgiven the French for taking Timbuctoo from them. Then there are wandering tribes of Arabs, Iforas—oh, many of them—all anxious to drive out the French, however much they profess happiness under French rule. They've never forgiven the French for taking their desert from them."

"That's all true," Rodenbach put in suddenly, "it's all true what he says. I think he's got the best plan."

"Ah," Von Harden smiled, "it doesn't take you so long to grasp a situation. It is the only plan that will save you two. Once past Timbuctoo, we're safe."

He had swept me off my feet, and as his plan unfolded I suddenly began to smile. I held my sides and bent over, laughing.

"And you," Von Harden broke in, "you can go out with Herr Doktor or stay with me."

"Oh, no," I interrupted, "I'll not go out with Herr Doktor. I'll stay with you. You bet I will. I'll stay with you." Again I bent over, laughing louder than before. It was as though we were in a separate world, and all thoughts of the hell we had been through, all thoughts of the hell we would have to face, were blotted from my mind. My laughter was so infectious that soon Rodenbach was laughing with me. I looked up and found Von Harden also unable to restrain himself. I think now it was the release we needed. The past had never happened, and we were care-free. The three of us stood around the inside of that tent laughing until our sides shook, and at what—we couldn't have told. But it was an excellent let-down from the strain

we had been through. To an outsider we might have been suffering from jungle fever—slowly going out of our minds. Perhaps we were.

"Now that's settled," Von Harden said after we had quieted, "the first thing is to destroy everything we do not absolutely need. The reports, our rifles and ammunition are the prime necessities. The other stuff we will burn."

He passed out of the tent, and I followed. His cap, dirty though it might be, was slanted over his right eye, his red neck bulged over his coat collar, and the glint of his monocle came back to me. As his foot touched the ground I saw both his hands involuntarily pull down his coat as though he were on parade.

"You're a hellion," I said to myself, "but I'll follow you. I'll follow you until you get it or I do, and I'll show you who's afraid." I was smiling at him, and it was some minutes later before I remembered that I had been mad at him, anxious to smash him again in the face.

"You've got something!" I said, half aloud, "you've got something. I don't know what it is, but you've got it. . . ."

Two hours later Rodenbach and I were putting the finishing touches to three large knapsacks we had cut out of our tents on a pattern furnished by Von Harden. He had made the pattern by sacrificing one of his beloved maps, and it pleased his critical eye.

"A long piece about two feet wide that forms the front, around and it is the bottom, and up and it is the back with a generous flap to turn down. Then fit in two sides and add two long straps to go over the shoulders and fasten to loops sewn at the bottom—like the army model—the ultimate in efficiency."

He had directed, and we had done the work. The results were to our credit. They suited our purposes admirably.

The reports were the first things packed. They were each carrying his own, while I had Müller's. The three bulky volumes were wrapped securely in oiled waterproof paper, then bound with adhesive tape, of which, by some strange anomaly, we had been left several rolls. When Herr Major passed the paper to me for wrapping I looked at it and suppressed a smile. I had seen it before—it was his precious map of the Paris defenses.

We placed the reports at the bottom of the knapsacks and over them stowed such of our ammunition as was not carried in our bandoliers.

"Above everything protect the reports," Von Harden added a final warning. "They are to be the first consideration."

I thought it in keeping with my new rôle to be meeker than I had been before. I was pursuing a policy of watchful waiting, and I said nothing. But I could not help but remember Rodenbach's pertinent observation days before: "He would work the three of us to death for the Fatherland." Now he thought only of the reports; we didn't count.

My opinion was that already he had killed off one of us. Who would come next? I determined that I would come last, whatever his plans for me. I would gloat over him when he was rotting to pieces or dying in agony from a poisoned arrow. Then I'd say of him as he had said of Müller, "The survival of the fittest!" I'd look down on him and smile. I'd remind him of his attitude toward me in the past, toward all of us, and I liked to think that this time I'd grind my heel in his face.

It wasn't a pleasant thought, but it was one he had engendered by his own actions. That laughter in his tent I knew was involuntary, a mask, just as he knew it, and seconds after it had died down we were again actuated by the most primal of instincts. My hatred of him became a mental obsession.

We laid out in a separate pile the things we were to carry, then started to destroy the camp—a pleasant duty. It had been such a morass of doubts and fears for us that my pleasure in destroying it grew in proportion to the pyre we built up in its center.

Our boxes were first, then came superfluous clothing (we had little of the latter that hadn't rotted beyond repair), reserve calcium, ropes, tent poles, folding chairs, tables, cots. Rodenbach's and Müller's specimens were dumped unceremoniously aside. Von Harden's books were torn up and thrown in, maps (other than the Sahara), everything that was not to be carried went onto the pile.

Von Harden would fit together a dozen cooking pots, then shoot a hole through their bottoms with his pistol. He destroyed that camp with a thoroughness that missed nothing. He was a maniacal genius at destruction, or, perhaps, efficiency.

Then we started loading. First came the heavy knapsacks; on top of them we each had a hammock, a blanket, two bandoliers of bullets apiece, and a water bottle. A machete bobbed from each of our waists. I took my Winchester in my hand with my Jefferies across my back, in some way not interfering with the load already there. My pistol and full belt were around my middle. Rodenbach carried Von Harden's heavy Mauser, and Von Harden had his shotgun, with his pistol and full belt under his machete. In addition he had his field glass strapped somewhere on his bulging person.

They were unwieldy loads for the narrow trail we were to traverse . . . but where were we to economize? I couldn't tell. I was the most heavily weighted, yet there was nothing I could discard. Everything I had was an essential. The same was true of the others.

Finally we were ready. When the match was applied to the equipment left behind, I had to look away. We were

burning our bridges behind us. It was too late to turn back. We were starting afresh; we three sick and emaciated whites. Our best friends were the rifles we carried and our compasses.

As we started out of the clearing, cutting a new trail ahead, a sudden blaze arose above the smoldering pile. I rushed back to see its origin and found poor Müller's celluloid checkers—the checkers that were to have brought us closer together, to have promoted harmony. The sight of them did not improve my spirits, and I wondered how long we could continue together before our raw tempers would begin getting the better of us. Von Harden had been fairly tractable after Müller's death. But how long would he continue so?

Three heavy loads on three bent backs, guided by compasses and kept alive by stout hearts. My heart of a somewhat vacillatory malice to dog the footsteps of Von Harden; his upheld by an almost superhuman fetish of duty in getting his reports to Berlin—and Rodenbach? We knew little of what was passing in his mind. He had gone back into his shell as at Mangu; he was morose and had little to say. No Ishmaels ever started their wanderings under stranger circumstances.

Already each of us had a beard; Von Harden's boils had completely encircled his body, and before we had gone a kilometer he removed his pistol and machete belts and hung them around his neck. He cursed each time a bush would strike him in the middle. To make matters worse, something had left its mark on his right ear, which was swollen like a battered prize fighter's.

Rodenbach had killed a blue spider on his neck, but too late. Judging from appearances he might have had a goitre. He was silent and passive. I suspected he might be hiding worse calamities from us. The fight had gone out of him. I wondered then for my own safety with Von Harden.

I was physically exhausted when the trek started. I had an irritable temper, I ached in every limb. I wanted to lie down and sleep until the Judgment Day. I knew what I had—malaria. Both my trouser legs had rotted off above the thighs, and my knees had been so bitten by insects that they resembled great dull red knobs; I had scratched them until they were mottled, then rubbed them vainly with castor oil.

With heads down and backs heavy laden we started out of that camp, Von Harden leading the way, smashing great swathes with his machete, and half moaning with each blow. He was a grotesque figure—we all were. Despite the load he carried, I could see that his uniform was split down the back. I was floundering along, sweating at a high pitch in one of Müller's coats.

And as though to plague us beyond reason, before we were ten minutes out of the clearing with the heavy smoldering fire permeating the grayness behind us, we heard the unmistakable "boom-boom-boom, boom, booom, booom . . ." The signal had been flashed ahead that we were leaving, the jungle telegraph was writing "finish" to us. The shivers ran up and down my spine, yet I was glad it had come.

It was a strange gladness that Rodenbach's haggard,

"Oh God, we're in for it now," could not down. I looked ahead and saw Von Harden turn wearily and peer behind, and I noticed that his trousers had been torn as had mine, and his legs were swollen and distorted. Rodenbach seized the moment's wait to pinch his neck, and I saw some yellow pus run down inside his shirt. I think the sound of that war drum gave me renewed energy. I no longer wanted to lie down in the jungle and sleep, unconcerned with the consequences.

We waited, and after a time the booming died down. Then we went ahead, and luck was with us. We heard no more of the drums.

That night we shivered and quaked and were afraid to light a fire. We stood around wrapped in our blankets, and while one slept, or tried to sleep despite the swarms of insects that fell upon us, the others kept guard. We were not molested that night, nor were we the next.

Rodenbach came out of his shell once to show us how to knock monkeys over with clubs. That meant a nerve-racking search for dry wood, a furtive fire, and considerable worry—but food. We found that the females were the better, the males had an odor of musk that even we in our sorry plight could not overlook.

I hit upon the scheme of killing frogs with a club or of digging them out of their hiding places in the soft ooze. These were big frogs, as big as a young chicken, and they were readily acceptable. But again a search for wood, a furtive fire, worry, and food. It was a hard existence and a terrifying one, but we had no choice.

Eventually we came into a more sparsely grown district

and as though fate wanted to torture us still further, Von Harden succeeded in bringing down a wart hog. Of all things to kill for food a wart hog was the least beneficial, but we could do no other. It wasn't dead ten minutes before we had it skinned and a fire going. It was tough and bitter.

And minutes later we had the fire out and were plugging ahead again. Still northwest, northwest. Von Harden would set his compass by a point ahead, reach it, and find another. It was slow, but it was progress.

"It may be thinning now," he offered after a time. Rodenbach looked up through bleared eyes. He said nothing but found a log and sat on it, sighing heavily. His glasses were grimy, but he took no pains to clean them.

"These natives have got to strike sometime," I said, the drums still ringing in my ears. Von Harden made no reply. I looked at him and found him intently studying Rodenbach, who was holding his face in his hands, his blanket fallen grotesquely over his head. Von Harden's eyes were bloodshot, but behind his dirty face, his scraggly beard, I could see the firm set of his jaws, and by the way he was looking at Rodenbach I sensed trouble ahead. Was it to be another case of Müller?

"It seems to be thinning out ahead," he said suddenly. "Come on." He started away, and I shook Rodenbach by the shoulder. He looked up at me, his face haggard and worn, then slowly got to his feet. I picked up his blanket and threw it on top of my own. He made no protest but shuffled on before me. "Thanks," he said suddenly, wearily, as though he wanted to say more but couldn't.

"Forget it," I replied, "this jungle can't go on forever. There's open country somewhere ahead. Must be, according to the maps." He nodded his head in affirmation, then his chin sank down on his chest, and he plodded on. Poor old Rodenbach, the humorist who had given me the only bright spots of the trip. I saw him again at that native village trying to entice Müller into accepting the chief's light o' love. Was this to be another case where Von Harden would win? I determined that it shouldn't be.

Suddenly I heard Von Harden shout. It wasn't a warning, but rather an exultation, and I plunged ahead, running past Rodenbach. Some distance on a change seemed to come over the entire world. At first I couldn't place it. I was like a prisoner coming up out of a dungeon after years of confinement. A great shaft of light shot down out of the brightness and illuminated a spot to which Von Harden was pointing.

It was the sun.

I hadn't seen it for so long that it took my breath away, and for a moment I stood staring straight into it. Behind me Rodenbach was stumbling forward, and I heard his fervent "Thank God, oh, thank God!" Then quickly I turned away, for my eyes were smarting, and I saw Rodenbach on his knees. He was mumbling incoherently. Von Harden was standing to one side grinning widely.

The sun poured into a space perhaps half a kilometer wide, and on the other side we saw the same jungle we were leaving, aloof, mysteriously quiet, and ominous. But, more important, we saw that the clearing between was a dry river bed, knee deep in long grass, and we knew that

it would lead to the Niger. If we were not already out of the jungle, we were nearing its end.

I can see the three of us pausing, hesitating on the edge of that open space, basking in the sunlight yet apprehensive lest its very promise of better fortune ahead should be a trap. To go across it would mean exposing ourselves as we hadn't been exposed in weeks. We had to cross it, and we were scared. The habits of the jungle were still firmly implanted within us. We seemed afraid to move out into the open. Yet I was so pleased on seeing the sun that I wanted to slap Von Harden on the back. I took a step toward him when the thought came to me that Von Harden was not a man one slapped on the back.

A moment later I was more firmly of that impression, for I looked at him and found him doing a characteristic thing. With the appearance of the sun and with his first entry into the open he had taken off his drooping and grimy cap and was attempting to mold it into some semblance of its one-time grandeur. He was again the officer on parade, regardless of his surroundings. Here was his first chance to shine, and he was taking full advantage of it. I watched him, and suddenly my sense of humor triumphed over my malaria. I laughed until the tears ran down my cheeks. He must have known the reason, for he looked at me a minute, his eyes glaring, then he put his cap on and removed his monocle. He reached for the familiar handkerchief and found it missing. But he was not downed. He compromised by blowing on the glass, then he rubbed it over what was left of his trouser leg. After that he screwed it firmly into place. Then he paused, seized the bottom of

his uniform coat and pulled it down, threw back his shoulders, and stepped jauntily out into the sun behind Rodenbach.

Suddenly a slight breeze blew toward us, and with it a terrible smell. It was so foul that they both sprinted back into the shadow of the greenery. Von Harden grasped his nostrils, and I turned my back, burying my face in my arms.

"It's a body," I said between gasps; "it's rotting out there."

Von Harden looked at me above his cupped hand and scowled. Rodenbach was the only one who spoke. "No," he said, "it isn't a body. I know. . ." He smiled, and in a trace his lethargy seemed to vanish. He started boldly out into the clearing, and Von Harden started with him.

"Come on," he said, turning to me; "we haven't heard a native for three days. They aren't around here. Come on. . ."

I was not convinced that because we hadn't seen or heard them they were through with us. I knew too much of African customs, and I felt that they would harry us into a state of nervousness before taking active hostilities against us. This they seemed to be doing by their constant drumming every time we had changed camps, and by the furtive sights of them we had caught slinking through the bush, watching us and waiting. . . . Often I had wished they would strike and get it over with. The nervous tension was too much for me.

Once he was out in the sun I saw Rodenbach look straight up into it and smile. I saw him pause and take

a dozen deep breaths of the sweet, cool air that came to us intermittently with gusts of the foul. I saw his chest swell. I knew it meant the cure of the poisonous mass on his neck. Better air and sunlight meant better food and, armed as we were and as desperate, we had no intention of starving.

We got into the middle of that field, and I felt rocks, actual rocks under my feet. I felt so good I began to whistle, oblivious of the terrible smell that came to us on the breeze.

Finally we came up to it. Rodenbach was standing grinning at us and when we covered our noses he threw his head back and laughed. That gesture in itself made me feel better. The sight of the sun was more invigorating to us, I think, than if our carriers had come back to us in the jungle.

We looked down where he was pointing, and instantly I knew the cause of the smell. I should have known it long before with my years of Africa behind me. But I had been occupied with other things. Now it was a fetid and revolting smell; Von Harden was gagging, and I watched to see his monocle fall out, but it didn't.

A dead elephant was on the ground before us. It had been rolled over on its back and its entire middle laid open with a knife. The result can be better imagined than described. It had been dead perhaps a week.

But what held us to the spot was something far different. Something that made me look quickly into the surrounding jungle and take a firmer grip on my Winchester. I expected any minute to see the bush disgorge a hundred Gurma heads.

Sticking in the animal's entrails were several score narrow shafts, notched and tufted at the upright end. That told the whole story. Their points were being poisoned by being left buried in the rotting, putrid flesh. It was the usual African custom.

Rodenbach lifted one out and studied it.

"Only been in two or three days," he said. "Won't be ready for a week. The natives won't be coming back for them yet." My heart seemed to beat easier.

Von Harden listened and nodded his head. Then quickly he bent forward, grabbed several in one quick movement and broke them over his knee, cursing at the sudden realization that his knee was badly swollen. Nevertheless, he went on until he had broken them all. He threw the pieces in a pile at his feet.

"No damned nigger puts them in me," he growled. "You say these men won't be back for them soon?" Rodenbach nodded.

"Then let's get out of here. Keep right on north into that jungle ahead. It can't last forever. See! See!"

He stooped down and picked up a handful of grass. "Look at this," he said, pointing to the roots, "a lot of it is sand. The desert is up ahead. We're out of it now."

And it seemed that we were, for as we got to the edge of the jungle I, who was leading, suddenly came upon a sight I thought I would never again see in this world. It was the most welcome sight we could have come upon. God was with us and had created a special miracle for our benefit.

I stumbled into an abandoned yam field. It had been

deserted months before by a roving tribe, and now thick yam leaves were spread in every direction. I drew out my machete and with a glad cry fell among them, throwing up the earth right and left around me. My Jefferies fell over my head, and the blanket with it. I shook myself free and within a matter of minutes we three Ishmaels were streaking our faces with yam juices. We were too famished to wait for a fire. We were too hungry to talk.

Anyone coming upon us might have thought we were mad the way we were tearing at raw yams. Perhaps we were mad. I know we were happy beyond words. Now our troubles were over.

Like porters returning from a long safari, we gorged ourselves on the first food we came upon, then were reluctant to move. We knew we were safer for the night with the open river bed before us than if we chanced the new jungle, and we dug a fresh supply of yams, then, moving eastward, strung our hammocks on the edge of the clearing, yet hidden by the bush. I stood guard while the others slept, and though I was on the verge of exhaustion I kept awake by watching the rise of a huge moon, the first I had seen in weeks. It all seemed too good to be true.

Wrapped in my blanket and shivering in the night air, I wandered in the shadows and looked forward to what I would do when I was once again in civilization—the present experience a memory behind me. I saw myself in Berlin, but not for long, for before leaving the Kamerun I had planned eventually to wind up in the United States, where I had been told there was no military party ruling the country, no *Kultur* as we Afro-Germans knew it.

I ruminated on the career of Müller, honored by a dozen universities and ending his life in the vile jungle hell we had left; I thought of Rodenbach and all he was in the scientific world; I reviewed Von Harden in detail. I began to see a double significance to the reports we were so anxious to save, that we had completed at such cost. They

were valuable not alone for the scientific data they contained, but also because by means of them more Kultur was to be spread throughout Africa. And in risking my life to save them I was offering it on the altar of the jingoism I despised. I understood then the place they occupied in Von Harden's eye. He was working for the militarists and also to further the aspirations of the social class of which he was a part—the exponents of Kultur. I hated him, and I should have hated the reports. But I didn't. They had been completed at too great cost to two of my friends.

Around me the trees sighed on a light breeze. Occasionally I would hear the cry of a prowling animal, and each time I approached the hammocks the satisfied sighs convinced me it was not a dream. The past was all a nightmare. A star-filled sky was overhead, and I found myself counting the blue shafts that blinked down and were promises of better days to come. At the same time they were shining on persons sitting in Berlin beer gardens; they were shining on my tiny house in the Kamerun; they would soon shine on the United States I wanted so badly to get to.

We were saved and eventually we would escape. Where to, or when, or how I had no idea. Let those problems come when they might. The important part was that we were nearing the edge of the prison that had held us for weeks. That in itself was justification for my high spirits.

But I did not relax my vigilance. And had we lighted a fire as Von Harden had suggested, had the three of us banked too heavily on the failure of the Gurmas to locate us, perhaps now I would not be writing this account.

For in the moment we thought we were safest, we were on the brink of catastrophe.

I was on the verge of awakening Rodenbach and Von Harden for their period as guards, I was feeling my way toward them through the dim shadows, when something seemed to hold me, the same something that had been my good genie twice before. At first I sensed it rather than saw it. I knew it was there, yet I couldn't put my finger on it. I took out my pistol and squatted on my haunches, holding my breath. I began to sweat, and my eyes prodded the blackness that shut me in.

Suddenly I saw. It was a tiny pinprick of light far ahead up the gully, on the opposite side. I watched it with bulging eyes, assuring myself that it was a firefly. But it wasn't. It flickered and wavered—but it never disappeared. Then I knew. It was a fire—a camp fire.

Two courses were open to me. I might awaken the others and flounder deeper into the new jungle. Or I might let them sleep and be the more prepared for whatever was to be the aftermath. Harried as we had been, foodless and worried, we were no match for an attack by Gurmas.

The latter course was the better one, and I determined upon it. Were it necessary, we could move much faster after a night of rest than after one of worry.

And I felt a considerable satisfaction in the knowledge that I was not running to Von Harden for advice. I was making the decision now. I was standing on my own feet.

I felt my way back to Von Harden's equipment, clambered under his swaying hammock, and found his glass.

Gingerly I extracted it from his other dunnage while his breathing rose above me, even and untroubled.

My efforts availed me little. It was not a night glass and it proved only that what I had seen *was* a fire. It was a small fire, and for all of my minute study I could not see a person stirring around it. It hung there on the night air, strange and menacing.

I had been watching it for a long time when suddenly a voice seemed to leap at me out of the darkness. It was low and cool, and not until it repeated was I able to compose myself.

"What is it?" It was Von Harden. He had been peacefully sleeping ten minutes before, yet here he was. He missed nothing. Asleep or awake, he seemed to be all eyes.

"A fire," I managed to say, "a camp fire."

"Give me . . ."

He took the glass and stared in the direction I pointed. For a long time he said nothing. When he did speak, what he said was characteristic of him.

"I could place your Winchester right in the middle of them. If only somebody would move I could give him something to think about."

"No doubt you could, but don't," I spoke quickly. "Let them alone. The moment you shoot, they know we're here."

I became doubly worried for fear his impatience would get the better of him. "Don't shoot," I repeated in a husky whisper. "Let's awaken Rodenbach and move deeper in."

"What? Move in—flee—flee from those niggers? What are you talking about?"

"Hell!" I retorted, "this is no time to be heroic. We can't fight them. There may be a hundred up there." Then a thought came to me. "How do we know they're natives? Perhaps they're whites. Perhaps they're looking for us."

I heard his voice falter. He mumbled something that escaped me, and I saw him again point his glass in the direction of the light.

That he would quiet down and become sensible was my main hope, when suddenly he shattered the dream.

"If they're French," he blurted, "I'd like to get the first crack at them. If they'd only get up so I could make them out, I'd knock a few over before they'd know what was going on."

"Don't fool yourself," I shot back at him. "The French aren't such idiots."

"Bah!" he grunted disgustedly. I knew what was irking him. He couldn't picture the grand Von Harden slinking through the night, fleeing from a camp fire, French or Gurma. Rather he pictured himself moving majestically through the country with a division of infantry behind him. That was the way to do things.

He was tapping his foot impatiently when I determined to force the issue. "You watch and see if they move," I said. "If they come down this way let me know. I'm going to get some sleep." I started toward the hammocks, and he accompanied me.

"Give me the telescope on my Mauser," he said.

But I beat him to it. I grabbed up the gun, removed the telescope, and passed it to him. Then I put the gun in my hammock and leaped up on top of it.

Instead of getting angry, I heard his low laugh. I could feel his eyes boring into mine out of the darkness.

"Poor Nagel," he said depreciatingly, "I think you're scared."

"No," I replied, "I'm sensible. We're on the verge of getting out of this now, why spoil it at the last minute?"

I adjusted my blanket around me when I heard Rodenbach's untroubled snore. I could picture his mouth open and his head thrown back. I saw him again on the veranda at Mangu, and I smiled.

"Nagel," Von Harden spoke out of the darkness, "let's get up on two sides of that camp and throw some lead at them." This time he laughed outright. I didn't. I knew he was without fear. The least sign of acquiescence on my part would start him off on a two-man war. I knew him by this time.

"Go away and let me sleep," I said. "I'm dog tired."

I heard him moving off, laughing softly to himself. "Poor Nagel, he's afraid."

But I didn't sleep. I tossed and rolled, and every creaking of the trees overhead was a Gurma poising himself to shoot a poisoned arrow into me, every movement in the bushes was a French tirailleur taking careful aim at me. When finally the blackness gave way to a gray morning mist I was still in a cold sweat, stiff in every limb and smarting in the eyes. Von Harden's hand on my shoulder

was a welcome relief. After much shaking, Rodenbach stirred, yawned, and sat up, looking around.

"By God," were his first words, "I dreamed we were out of this!" He sighed heavily and fell back.

I became increasingly worried about him. This was the way poor Müller had started to break up. I saw Von Harden glaring at him, and I felt he was on the brink of another explosion. If one came, I was ready, for I had a feeling that Von Harden and I were reaching a crucial point. And that morning, with ourselves lost in the jungle and Rodenbach depressed and exhausted, was no time to have a flare-up. As Rodenbach had wisely enough told me, we needed each other.

I told him of the fire of the night before. "It went out a half hour ago," Von Harden added. He looked again at Rodenbach, a quizzical expression on his face. "Perhaps they're heading this way," he said, quietly, as though he were testing the geologist.

"I don't care what they do," came weakly from under Rodenbach's blanket. "My neck is stiff."

"I'd like to go back and wake those niggers up," Von Harden ignored him. "What say, Nagel?"

"No," I said. "We've got to keep moving." Here was my chance. I'd play his own game. "We've got to get these reports out."

"Yes, that's it. Nagel is right." It was Rodenbach. "We've got to get the reports out."

I saw Von Harden smile and start picking up his equipment. I knew two forces were warring within him. He could not picture an officer of the German Army running

away from a "flock of niggers," as he called them, and at the same time his duty was to complete the mission he had been sent on. That meant saving the reports. As always his "duty" won. "All right," he said. "Get going quickly."

We rolled up our blankets and hammocks and within ten minutes were moving away, munching greedily on the reserve yams.

Von Harden came on with many a backward glance. "Let's get a shot," he kept repeating. "Running away like this."

I prevailed upon him to continue. And I watched Rodenbach shuffle along with growing concern. He didn't help me with Von Harden, and I knew that now I was on my own. There would be no Rodenbach to hold him down as there had been in the past. It would be up to me. I had responsibilities now I'd never had before. First Müller had been on my hands, and now I suspected a collapse by Rodenbach. Well, I'd be ready for Herr Major. There was nothing he could do that would surprise me. At first I had been merely a boy looking for adventure, now I felt myself becoming a man, with perhaps the success of the whole expedition falling upon me. That thought itself sent the blood rushing faster through my veins. I vowed I'd live up to the challenge. I'd show this Potsdam militarist.

"They've given us up," Von Harden said after a time.

I did not answer but increased my gait. For if I knew African natives on a man hunt for whites, these Gurmas would never give up. I had seen blacks track fugitives

before. There is something fiendish and diabolical in their persistence, once they have been ordered to bring in a European. Now I was one of the fugitives wanted, I, who was a friend of the natives. It was a strange juxtaposition, but no stranger than most things that had happened to us. I plunged after Rodenbach and heard Von Harden clump-clumping on ahead. I knew the Gurmas had not given us up. First they would harass and annoy us into a nervous exhaustion.

That night we slept as before, but there was no incident to give us cause for worry. The following day we were off again long before the sun was up. We stopped only for a noon rest when we came upon a stream abounding in frogs. Again a quick fire and a meager meal. Later, by the thin light of a moon, we found our way around thick underbrush, grateful for every foot we could put behind.

Then with the same suddenness that had marked every high spot on the trip, the next afternoon we came upon a thinning out of the trees. Off to the right were rolling, green-covered mountains, to the left an openness that went on indefinitely, and overhead a blue sky and a roaring sun. Search as we might, we could find no more dense jungle ahead. It was the moment we had looked forward to for weeks. Now it had come. We were out.

"Thank God we can move faster," I said. I turned to Von Harden and found him staring back over the trail we had covered. I knew what was on his mind.

We were hungry and tired, but again we stood in the shadow of hell, looking out on a different world. Behind us stretched the same impassive, silent, and thick jungle

we had known for so long. Our clothes hanging in tatters, our faces bearded and dirty, and our packs still weighing us down, we were the happiest of men.

I looked behind and raised my fist. "Damn you," I shouted exultantly at the green solitude, "we're through with you! We've beaten you! We've won! Do you hear it? We've won! You won't kill us now! We've won!"

Rodenbach turned wearily and peered through his thick glasses. But he said nothing. He seemed too tired to speak.

Von Harden whirled around with a wide grin on his face. He tugged his cap down tighter over his eye, braced his shoulders, and cleared his throat. He spat contemptuously back into the jungle. Then, as though to emphasize his feelings, he spat a second time. A moment later, and for the first time in days I heard the old familiar tap-tapping of his riding crop. Only this time not against his swagger boots but against a red and swollen knee. At the same moment I became conscious of a stinging between the toes of my right foot. "Athlete's foot," I believe it is called in this country. We've known it for years in Africa as "jungle foot." The big toe of my right gum sneaker had worn through, and for days the hole had been patched with mimosa leaves. But now we were out in the dry country. The little we wore would at least cease rotting from now on. The worst was behind us.

We stepped out of the shadows to embark on what promised to be a new life when suddenly something shot between Rodenbach's head and mine. For a split second the surprise paralyzed us. I remember standing there in a

trance, listening, afraid to move. The only sound behind us was the sighing of wind-blown leaves.

"It's an arrow," I suddenly heard Von Harden shout. With a wild yell he turned and simultaneously I heard two sharp cracks of his shotgun. Then several more arrows came at us. One struck my blanket with such force as to half whirl me around. In the excitement I saw Rodenbach drop his gun and clutch at an arrow in his arm—then all was confusion. The sight of Rodenbach wounded brought me out of my lethargy. Friends or no friends, the natives had struck the most harmless man among us. I would avenge him.

Von Harden was on one knee. I heard him shouting, "Come on, come on, niggers. Give it to them, Nagel. . . ." He was laughing at the top of his voice.

I don't know what else he said, for my attention was held by the shadowy shape of a man crouching behind a bush not a hundred feet from me. I brought up my Winchester and at the first crack I saw him go over on his back. I snapped the breech and was looking for another when Von Harden stole the play. He reloaded his gun and rising lithely dashed straight into my line of fire, yelling hysterically. Back into the jungle he went, prodding into each bush and swearing at the top of his voice.

"Come here, Nagel," I heard him shout, "find the devils and give it to them."

I lost no time in joining him. But there were no devils to find. They had disappeared as mysteriously as at the camp where we buried Müller.

I looked behind the bush where I had seen the man go

over on his back. He wasn't there. Nor was there any trace to show he had been there. Von Harden had no better success. We appeared like two idiots shouting at nothing. From the quietness of the jungle there weren't any Gurmas within kilometers of us. After a time we gave up the search. We went back to Rodenbach, who all the time had been trying to extricate the arrow implanted in his right arm above the elbow.

"I got it," was all he said.

He did have it. We cut the arrow out and took turns sucking the wound. Then we washed it with castor oil for want of something better, and bound it tightly with adhesive tape. Meanwhile there had been no further signs of our attackers. The whole thing had happened in less than five minutes. Now it was over, and Rodenbach was wounded.

"It's all right," he suddenly spoke up. "We'll burn the wound out when we make the next fire."

Von Harden stepped to the fore again. "Better cover in this bush," he said, picking up Rodenbach's equipment. "Come on, let's get in here. Keep out of that jungle. Start out, Nagel, I'll cover the rear. Northwest, away from the river; too many villages. Hurry. If they want to fight we'll give them enough, but they've got to come out where we can see them. I can't kill ghosts."

"The ghosts won," I thought to myself as I went ahead. Was this the beginning?

**T**HREE was no moon that night. We played hide and seek with invisible forces. It was a night of terror such as I had never put in before on a dozen safaris. We tried to keep together and found ourselves stumbling over each other. We tried to stay ten paces apart and spent agonizing moments trying to find each other. We came around a clump of bamboo to find two yellow eyes staring at us not twenty feet away. After a moment of hesitation they turned sullenly and disappeared with an angry snarl. We fell into some sort of a trench and climbed out bruised and cursing.

"The hammocks have got to go," Von Harden whispered early in the evening. "Throw out everything you can. Keep only the reports and your bullets. Lighten up."

I didn't tell him that I had already thrown my hammock away. I fumbled with Rodenbach's and untied it. "Thank God," he said when it was off. "The whole outfit is too bulky."

"I'm throwing out our two blankets," I spoke up to Von Harden. "You keep yours. We've got to do it."

I thought that in the darkness I could hear him pause at my declaration as though he had some comment to make but had restrained himself.

"Throw out his machete too," came at me in the gruff

voice. "No, no, no," he hastily corrected himself. "Bury it . . . bury it . . . don't let them get it."

"We've got too many guns," I hastened to add.

But he was firm on that point. "No, no, Nagel," he shouted aloud, agitatedly. "Keep the guns, we'll need them later on. Keep the guns above everything."

However, I did take a chance in throwing away a box of one hundred bullets for my heavy gun. That load in itself must have weighed ten pounds. Thus lightened and with only the Jefferies across my back, the half-empty knapsack, two bandoliers of bullets, and my water bottle and pistol around my waist on still another bullet-studded belt, I felt better. I could go ahead without the blanket and hammock threatening to tip me over when I leaned sideways. Tired as I was and as hungry, I felt that now I could fight the entire Gurma nation. I wanted something to happen, something tangible. Like Herr Major, I couldn't fight ghosts.

Off somewhere to our right we heard a sudden hoarse half laugh, half growl. To Von Harden it was a hyena, but Rodenbach and I knew better.

"There they are," I heard Rodenbach whisper, pausing and holding me back. "They're signaling."

"Don't tell Von Harden," I whispered; "he'll want to charge them."

"I'd like to give him this arm. It pains. . . ."

"Come on," I replied, "we'll get out in the open some time. Then we'll build a fire."

"Yes, some time, Nagel," he said dispiritedly. "I don't think so, boy."

"Come on, come on, buck up."

I left him and started away to the left when suddenly I stepped on something that at first I thought was a bamboo stalk. It wasn't. It writhed, oozed out from under my foot, and I heard a rustle as it coiled. I got away from that spot quicker than I ever moved in my life. I wasn't a split second too soon. I heard it plop down again after it had struck at the darkness. I thought of our uncovered knees.

A dog barked behind us. From the right we heard the hyena again. Bushes crashed somewhere near by. Von Harden crept up to us. I warned him of snakes, then stepped out gingerly. I was so nervous, the sound of my breathing gave me cold shivers. So it went for hours.

Once we were crouching behind a bush when four men appeared like ghouls and crossed behind us, going off to our left. Von Harden grabbed his shotgun, and for want of a better expediency I bumped into him and knocked him off balance. When he recovered they had disappeared. He snorted in disgust but said nothing. I was mad not only at the Gurmas but also at Von Harden. The moment he was foolish enough to fight them, that moment we were lost. There might have been ten surrounding us, there might have been a thousand. We couldn't tell. Again the threat of the unseen sapped our courage.

But we went on. Inch by inch, jump by jump, from one shadowy form to another we crept forward while, unrelenting, the Gurmas kept in touch with each other. Fate was on our side. They didn't find us.

The biting cold of early morning came, and we were oblivious of it. The first gray streaks of dawn found us dodg-

ing from one clump to another. Never had I been so glad when a night was over. The bushes were becoming fewer each kilometer, and before the sun had risen we struck the plains, the low rolling plains we had dreamed of.

We squatted on the edge of the last bush and crowded whisperingly over the discovery. They stretched before us, ankle deep in thick pasture grass, and we knew that far ahead they gave way to a rolling sand, an endless desert that extended up to the waters of the Mediterranean. I was too tired and hungry to think of slapping Von Harden on the back.

Rodenbach was fumbling with his arm, and I became increasingly worried. I ripped off the adhesive tape. The wound looked bad. We needed a fire, a red-hot machete blade, and we might burn out the poisoned flesh—if Rodenbach could stand it. He could stand anything, he said.

Von Harden was looking off to the right through his glass. Suddenly he turned to us with a gleam of such happiness in his eyes as I had never seen. He was a changed man—a new Von Harden, or perhaps the old Von Harden back again.

"I can see something," he whispered breathlessly. "I can see something." He looked closer and slapped his thigh. "Horses!" he shouted. "Horses! By God—horses!"

We were not concerned with his discovery. Rodenbach had squeezed his arm, his face writhing, and I turned to him. Von Harden was oblivious of us. "Do you realize?" he kept repeating. "Horses—that means we're out—we're out—we're out."

He was grinning from ear to ear. I grabbed him by the

arm but could not capture his attention. He was held by the sight of the horses.

"Come on," I broke in, "we've got to build a fire. Herr Doktor's in agony . . . Von Harden . . . Von Harden."

He was so completely absorbed that he failed to notice my omission. What he was looking at meant safety, flight, security for his precious reports. "The hell with your horses!" I finally said. "We've got to fix Rodenbach."

"Eh? What?" He came back reluctantly.

"Rodenbach," I said. "Rodenbach."

"Ah!" His voice lowered, and he looked at the geologist in the same way he had looked at Müller and his broken ankle. I thought he would snap at Rodenbach, and if he did I was going to have it out with him on the spot. Safety for him meant also safety for me. I wondered if he thought of that.

Suddenly he surprised me by scrutinizing the ground closer to us.

"There's another dry river out there, a hundred yards," he said. "It's just the thing. They can't approach us without coming across the open. Come on."

Before I could answer, he was up and away. Rodenbach got wearily to his feet and followed, dashing as fast as he could behind Herr Major, who all the time he was running was looking off to the right, where he had seen the horses. I waited a moment, glancing around to see that we hadn't left anything, then took off after them.

I was halfway out across the open space when suddenly I heard voices behind me. They were unmistakable. I heard Rodenbach cry out to Von Harden, who paused a

moment as though torn between his new interest and his desire to fight the Gurmas. Suddenly he waved his arms. "Come on," he shouted, "come on. Let them come out here."

I looked back and saw a group of men standing on the edge of the bush only a short distance from where we had been. Like us, evidently, they were waiting for someone to appear. I got a fleeting glance at them and saw that several were in what appeared to be long black gowns. It came to me that we were getting out of the Gurma district. We were nearing the desert people. These warriors might be Fulanis, Sourhais, Arabs, Hausas; they could come from any one of a dozen nations. I saw one of the naked Gurmas among them pause and fit an arrow into his bow. Then I sprinted ahead.

As I came up to Rodenbach I put my hand around his waist and helped him along. It was well I did. Before we had reached our goal arrows were flying around us. But none struck. Von Harden turned about and went down on one knee, and I heard the sharp report of his shotgun. He fired twice, then got up and ran pell-mell ahead of us. When we got to the edge of the gully I saw that it was fairly wide and deep. Best of all, it had sharply sloping sides. As I reached the brink I did not pause but pulled Rodenbach down, and we slid over the edge. Von Harden was there before us. I got a fleeting glimpse of his broad grin.

"Now it's coming," he shouted. "Get out your guns. Give it to them. There are plenty out there."

I looked up cautiously and saw that he was right. A

score of blacks were coming toward us, firing arrows as they came. But we were well protected in the gully.

Rodenbach was on my left and beyond him Von Harden. We laid our guns in front of us and took off our bandoliers. Rodenbach said he thought he could keep the guns loaded as we fired. I took careful aim with my Winchester and let go. Von Harden's heavy Mauser went off with a dull thud like a one-pounder.

"What about a license for this, Nagel? This is real shooting." He was shouting and firing in high glee.

Our marksmanship was good. After the first burst the natives paused, fell flat on their stomachs, and began calling to each other. Then they broadened out and came at us over a wider area.

Suddenly I heard Von Harden shout over Rodenbach's bent form: "I'm coming over on the other side of you, Nagel. Take the ones on the ends. They're heading to cut in along the river below us."

It was good advice. Things were happening so fast that I got only fragmentary pictures of what was going on.

I heard him sliding down the bank to the bottom of the river when suddenly, from far past me on my left, came a sharp crack. It was not one of our guns. My heart seemed to stand still. So far they had been firing at us with arrows. If they were armed with guns, our situation was doubly difficult. I looked up and listened. I heard it a second time and placed it. It was an old flintlock. It came from behind a jutting crag of rocks on the opposite bank. I looked down to locate Von Harden when Rodenbach said something. I didn't hear what it was, for my interest was

in Herr Major, who was running downstream toward the new menace. He was yelling at the top of his voice, and his Mauser was at the ready. Protected by rocks or not, I hated the thought of being the other person when Herr Major had murder in his soul.

My job was on the tableland above me. I looked up suddenly to find the blacks coming toward us on their hands and knees. They were close enough to feel the shotgun, and I gave it to them. Screams and yells told me that the tiny pellets were landing. When both barrels were empty I turned to where Rodenbach had been—he was not there. I loaded the gun and looked for him. He had slid down the bank and was doubled up below me, his equipment in a tangled mass around him.

I saw him looking up and waving me to stay where I was. Von Harden was running down the bed of the gully shouting like mad. I turned back to Rodenbach and saw him motioning me to hold the top of the bank. Then I gave the natives more buckshot. After that I went to the Winchester.

Suddenly the Mauser resounded from down river. Simultaneously with it I heard Von Harden's laughter, louder than before. I stole a moment to look and saw a black-gowned native rise from behind the rock pile, then tumble forward and crash down almost at Herr Major's feet. He'd brought him out.

I knew Rodenbach had been hit by the flintlock, and I wanted to go to him. But every time I looked in his direction he waved me to stay where I was. The solution came from the blacks in front of me. They tired of buckshot and

crawled back out of range. The Winchester widened the remaining breach.

I then slid down the bank to Rodenbach. "I got it," were his first words. "In my side." I rolled him over and found that the bullet had gone in just above his left hip. He was bleeding profusely. I didn't know what to say. I mumbled something when he cut me off. "Never mind me," he said, "you two run for it. I'm done."

I started to argue with him when suddenly I heard Von Harden's shout. I looked up and saw him coming from around the bend where he had disappeared. There was something grotesque in his appearance, and I had to look again. He was leading two horses. He waved to me and broke into a run.

"Come on," he shouted when he was closer. "Here's where we escape."

"Rodenbach's wounded," I told him quickly.

I saw his face pale, but only for a moment. He passed me the lead thongs of the horses and bent over the geologist. Then he looked up at me. "He's hit badly," he said aloud, brutally, I thought, for Rodenbach couldn't help but hear.

"I know," the wounded man spoke up. "I'm done for. You two aren't. Take my report and get out." He had already taken it from his knapsack. Now he attempted to pass it to Von Harden when I stepped in. I saw Von Harden's hand reach out when something made me act.

I grabbed it. "I'll take that." I saw his eyes glare. His chin shot out, and he straightened his shoulders. He attempted to speak when Rodenbach broke in.

"I'm done, boy," he said to me. "I won't last. You two escape while you can."

That seemed to draw Von Harden's attention away from me. He looked at the horses, and before I was aware of his actions he had jerked the thongs out of my hand.

"He's right," he said suddenly. "We'd better get out and save the reports." He leaped upon one of the horses, and I felt Rodenbach's hand on my leg.

"Go on, boy," he said weakly, "save yourself."

I looked down at him. His mouth was hanging open and his eyes were glazed. We could do nothing for him. Was this the end of the great Rodenbach? I doubted that he would last a half hour. And by then it might be too late. I had to make a decision.

"Come on," Von Harden shot at me, "bring those two reports. These fellows might come over the bank any minute."

"Please," Rodenbach begged huskily, "my report is more valuable. Take it and go."

It was a tense moment. I had to make a decision. Rodenbach was dying. There was no way of saving him. My proper action would have been to save his report. But I didn't. I made the decision of my life.

In the brief minute it took for that scene to be enacted I lived ten years. Before it I had been a boy, but now I was a man. I felt something rise up within me, the same something that had made me smash Von Harden in the face on the discovery of Müller's body. I think that in that moment I found myself. Now I knew my own strength. I

would no longer be awed by Von Harden. I was my own master.

My hand went down to my pistol. I snapped it out and surprised myself by pointing it at the exponent of Kultur. He was looking at me through wide eyes. I could hear Rodenbach mumbling incoherently.

"Get off that horse, Von Harden," I said as coolly as I could. "We stay here with Rodenbach. To hell with your reports."

Von Harden's lips moved, but he couldn't speak. He forced a smile, but his eyes gave him away. They were cold and hard. They told me what was going on in his mind. Suddenly I saw his hand drop down to his belt.

"Get off that horse," I said, springing at him, "get down here or I'll kill you. We stay with Rodenbach."

I felt so good I laughed outright. Evidently the look in my eyes belied the laugh in my voice, for as surely as I stood there I would have shot him. He must have sensed my intention, for he got down. Then I threw Rodenbach's report up the bank where we had been.

"Come on," I said, "we'll take a few more shots at the niggers." I spit it out at him, and he grinned.

We went up the bank, and instead of finding the natives advancing, as I had thought, they were gathered in a group on the edge of the bush. Had they given up the fight, or were they awaiting reinforcements? In any event, they were quiet. It was one of the big breaks of the trip, for had they come at the edge of the gully when we were arguing over Rodenbach they might have rubbed the three of us out at once. Instead, they lost their chance.

I started gathering my equipment, then slid down and went to Rodenbach. He looked up at me but could not speak. Von Harden joined us, when suddenly Rodenbach's eyes closed, calmly and peacefully. He was dead.

There was nothing we could do with him. I took his report and placed it with Müller's.

Five minutes later we were riding down the gully in the direction of the Niger.

As we rounded the bend from where Rodenbach had been shot, I saw two dead horses off to one side. I rode over and looked at them. They had been killed neatly through the temples. It had been done with a pistol. I looked up at Von Harden and found the same old quizzical smile on his face.

"Now no one can ride after us," he said simply.

I mounted and rode on behind him. He sat as jauntily as he had that day of the snake episode. His grimy cap was tilted forward, and his bare knees hugged the saddle with the grace of a cossack on parade. His long hair had grown over the back of his collar, but as he turned to look off to the side I caught the sun shining on his monocle. I went forward and saw that he was urging his horse on with the familiar riding crop. He smiled at me.

"Damn you to hell!" I said to myself. "Two of us are left. Who is next?"

C<sub>LATTERING</sub> along that winding defile beside him I got a lesson in horsemanship from a master rider. It was well I did, for I wanted something to occupy my mind. Unless the scene we had left were erased, I feared the outcome. For though on the surface I might have appeared calm enough, inside I was consumed with anger. It was the familiar atmosphere of hatred and suspicion all over again. But I wasn't given much time to ruminate on my second victory over him—if it had been a victory. Perhaps he had seen Rodenbach dying all the time and had gotten off his horse without a protest. Perhaps I had again made a fool of myself. Perhaps many things. I could not fathom him.

We hadn't gone far when he became dissatisfied with his saddle. Instead of the broad stirrup for half the foot that we had known, these stirrups consisted only of a small iron ring suspended on a piece of leather. The big toe of each foot was to fit into the small ring. The arrangement was ideal for me, because both toes had been out of my gum sneakers for longer than I cared to remember. He also found trouble with the seat, a contraption of uncovered wood that was hard and unyielding; yet I was grateful for it. Not so Herr Major.

He cursed the stirrups and bent forward in an effort to adjust the saddle, but without result. Eventually he de-

cided to improve upon his seat. He did it in the Von Harden manner.

I saw him lean sideways and fumble with some leather thongs at the side and I held my breath. Going as fast as we were anything might happen. The fumbling and cursing continued until finally he lifted himself forward. One hand was behind him and the other was guiding the bridle. I knew what he was trying to do, and he did it. He untied the saddle, lifted it around front—and he was riding bareback. It was a picture that increased my admiration for him. A strange horse, uneven ground, both guns and his blanket across his shoulders, his water bottle, machete, and pistol bobbing about on his waist, the full bandoliers weighing him down, and the knapsack jouncing on his back—and he would go bareback. He did.

The first clump of bushes we passed received the saddle with a vituperative comment. Then he settled back with a sigh of satisfaction. But he never spoke. The monocle remained in his eye, his legs clung to the horse's sides, and he continued like a conquering hero.

I wondered what were his thoughts, for since we had left the scene behind he had never spoken save once. However, he had grinned. And he was still grinning—diabolical, cunning, and half a sneer, the grin was never off his face. I wondered if he were plotting my death next, and if the anticipation pleased his sense of humor.

He was callous and brutal and possessed of a one-track mind. But that one track never wavered. It was not to be deflected from its course. And I thought that now its course was to get the three reports to Berlin. That was all that

mattered. He watched me out of the corner of his eye and said nothing. I watched him equally diligently, wrapped in the same silence. We were a strange pair. I admired him and I hated him. What he thought about me I'd have given a lot to know.

Uppermost in my mind was the scene we had left behind. I tried to dismiss it, but it was not easy. I regretted it more than I did Müller's death. At least Müller had been buried. Poor Rodenbach was left for our pursuers. Yet I knew it would have been foolhardy to attempt to bring him away. And granting that we had been able to place him over a horse, where could we have taken him?

In the final analysis we had done the only thing we could do. Yet I was not satisfied. As Rodenbach himself had said, the reports alone were of value. But I could not absolve myself. I saw the great Rodenbach of German Southwest Africa lying in a backwash of the Niger, neglected and disowned. It seemed grotesque and unbelievable.

Twice I rode forward to Von Harden and was on the verge of speaking to him about our desertion when an inner feeling held me back. The third time he must have surmised what was on my mind.

"Don't be a sentimentalist," he said, grinning at me.  
"I'm not."

"No. I'll pattern myself after you."

"You couldn't do better."

His smile broadened, and I could see a dozen conflicting emotions in his face. His eyes were hard and unwavering, and he looked straight at me as though my soul were open to him. He smiled only with his mouth.

"He'll probably try to shoot me, once we're out here alone," I thought. The thought came also to me that I could shoot him first. Then I felt better.

For some time the horses had been slowing down. They were winded and tired. They had good reason to be. Mine dropped to a canter. A moment later both stopped with long, deep sighs. Von Harden took the opportunity to dismount, and passing me the bridle he climbed up the bank and surveyed our surroundings through his glass.

When he came down I didn't ask him what he had seen, and he didn't offer to tell me. My reticence was not due to a childish pride, for I had grown past that, but because I had reasoned my course.

I knew now the solution to my plight. If he were so anxious to get out with the reports, my course lay in sticking to him. In saving himself and the reports he would also be saving me. All I had to do was to give him no opportunity to get me out of the way.

He mounted and rode ahead, and I watched him like a hawk. All the time he offered me his back, but I was in no mood to get ahead of him. And for no reason. When I thought back over what had happened there hadn't been a single incident in which he had shown himself a coward. He was too much for me. I rode on trying to think of other things. But I would not get ahead of him. Not the first day.

We continued along the river bed and passed much lion spoor and depressions that had been elephant wallows. Overhead a flock of ducks flew past. Gradually the culvert widened, and eventually we came around a bend to find a

scene confronting us that made us pull quickly under the shelter of a small mound. We tied our horses to some roots and climbed up to the top.

I parted the grass carefully and looked out. Von Harden was beside me with his glass.

A mixed flock of goats and sheep were grazing on the edge of a pool of water. Had we continued, we could have come head on into them. We knew they were not alone, but we had to look long and carefully to find their attendant. And no wonder.

He was a small boy, and at the moment he was sleeping peacefully in the shadow of a mimosa bush. Already my mind was working. It looked as simple as one could have wished. I had done it a hundred times as a lad in Germany.

I was so enthused with the prospect that I blurted it out to Von Harden. Then I felt surprised that I had. He surprised me still more by his answer.

"You let me handle this," I said, "and we'll get some goat's milk."

"Good boy, Nagel. Do what you want. What shall I do?"

That was more like it. He had never talked that way to me before. I had won. I was now the one on whom the responsibility rested. He had acknowledged me. I thrilled to my marrow. Then I outlined my plan to him, and he grinned.

The outcome was that we emptied our water bottles, crept around so that the flock was between us and the boy, and caught the nearest goat. We had no trouble milking it.

We caught another. Still a third. Then we returned to the safety of the mound and drank most of the milk. It was the first time I had had anything in my stomach in many hours.

"You're all right, Nagel," Von Harden said, wiping milk off his scraggling mustaches and beard. He reached for a handkerchief when the futility of the gesture came to him, and he glanced up at me, caught me watching him, and frowned.

I turned away to look out through the grass again. The boy was still sleeping. Just below him the river bed turned in again behind another small hill. Several young lambs were grazing near the opening. I got another idea.

"If you lend a hand I'll get us some mutton."

"Mutton, Nagel, mutton. What shall I do?"

"I'm going around behind that far hill. You stone those lambs around to me, and I'll kill one. We won't need to waken the boy."

"Fine, Nagel," he laughed. "Go ahead."

He started throwing stones at them, and I went down to the horses and got my machete. Then I climbed the bank and circled behind the boy. When I reached the side opposite Von Harden I slipped over, and there, watching my descent to the river bottom, were three young lambs. It all happened as simply as it reads. I don't know the name of the tribe of that boy shepherd, but it must have been preponderately negroid for no other African could sleep so soundly. Fifteen minutes later I went back to Von Harden with two fine legs of lamb.

"We'll get out of this yet," he greeted me. "Now let's

get away from here before that child wakes. He might set up an alarm."

We untethered the horses and soon were cutting across the country, diagonally away from the river. Some time later we saw several large trees looming against the horizon straight ahead. A thick clump of bushes was at their base, and we made for them. We approached warily, but came only upon a young elephant rubbing his back against a tree. He was as surprised at the intrusion as we were. He looked at us a moment, his eyes blinking and his tail waving, then trotted off. We let him go.

Von Harden sat outside as a guard with his glass in easy reach and the map of the Niger before him. I went deeper into the bushes and found some dry sticks. I cut down a young sapling and made a spit. Late that afternoon we enjoyed the finest meal since the yam orgy, roast young lamb washed down with goat's milk. We couldn't have asked for anything better. What pleased me more was that Von Harden was thawing out.

"There's a town called Ansongo somewhere near by," he said. "It's on the river, and I think it has a French garrison. We've got to avoid it. I can see some rolling hills, thickly wooded, well ahead on the right. We ought to make for them. Once we find out where we are we can set a course."

It was a longer speech than I expected, and the tenor of it raised my spirits.

"Good," I said. "If it keeps up like this we'll be all right."

After the meal I drew the horses into the bushes. Then

I got Von Harden's blanket. I remembered I hadn't slept in two days.

"I'm turning in," I said. "I'm tired."

"I was going to suggest it, Nagel. I'll stay here on watch. We'll move again later. All right?"

"All right," I replied as I walked away.

It worked out to perfection. We continued on that night, having little trouble in crossing the flat country. Occasionally we saw fires in the distance, and we took care to avoid them. Once we heard voices well off to the side and pulling up the horses we waited until they had disappeared. Another time we found ourselves on a road. We lost little time in getting off it.

The following morning we surprised a flock of teal on the edge of a marsh. Later we came upon another young shepherd, who fled wild-eyed at first sight of us, deserting his flock and, what was equally welcomed, his lunch.

"What we've got to do next," Von Harden said an hour later as we sat eating roast lamb, bananas, and rice cakes, washed down with excellent camel's milk, "is get some nigger clothes and a haircut. No wonder we frightened the boy."

But clothing was a problem that would be difficult to solve. It would mean coming in contact with the natives.

As for the hair, I singed off his beard with brands from a fire, and he did the same for me. The results were practical if not artistic. We must have been weird-looking objects.

Several times in the days that followed we saw villages. Once we watched a long caravan of bullocks and donkeys

coming south with a dozen yelling Hausas in charge, unaware of the two decrepit whites who stared after them from behind a clump of bamboo.

We were strange nomads. We dared not show our faces. We roamed through the country mostly at night like ghouls, ready to flee at the first sight of a human. Yet we lived upon a diet such as few nomads have lived upon.

Guinea fowl and partridge, wild oranges, duck and teal. Oysters in the streams, and an occasional fish we would chase into the shallow places and grab with our hands. Once we came upon a flock of cows herded behind a high mud fence for protection from lions and leopards, and for some reason left unguarded. We didn't wait to inquire why. We got our fill of milk and moved quickly away.

Our horses were in better condition than when we got them. Despite our continual riding, they had fattened on the lush grass at the water holes. I felt in better physical shape than I had in weeks. The roaring sun overhead, of which we seemed to be oblivious, quickly dried me out after the wet jungle, and the malaria was gone. Von Harden never mentioned his boils. From the way he sat bareback on his horse I knew they were giving him no pain. We rode, ate, and swam and had an enviable life. If only we could know where we were. Were we being followed? If only we could get some different clothes, a shave, and talk to a human. Being a fugitive has more disadvantages than appear on the surface.

I felt that we must be near the big bend of the Niger, for I had heard it described as a Golconda for sportsmen. Certainly from the signs around us I had never seen a coun-

try more rich in animal life. Stately marabouts we saw in huge flocks, crested cranes, hippos, gazelles, bush cows, waterbucks, crocodiles, hartebeests, lions, and leopards: it was a paradise.

Von Harden agreed that we were near the southward turn of the river.

"These caravans are coming from an important city," he said. "It must be Timbuctoo. We couldn't have passed it—it is on the edge of the desert. They are also going some place. I think we are between Ansongo and Gao. If we are, we are lucky, for just north of Gao is Burem, the last outpost for caravans going north. What do you think?" He knew what was on my mind.

"I say we should find out where we are and if we are being followed. Those questions are most important. Then we know where we stand. We can only get our location by speaking to someone or by cutting east to the river and finding a large town. But we daren't speak to anyone yet."

"Nagel," he interrupted, "I think you're wrong. Don't misunderstand me. You know more of Africa than I do," he harrumphed loudly before continuing, "but I don't think the niggers would look for us this far north. I don't think they're looking for us at all. They couldn't remember us overnight."

"But the French would, and the natives would too. They are not fools. The French know everything that goes on in the Sudan. It is well patrolled. There are sheep farmers a hundred kilometers out of Timbuctoo who even have telephones. The wires run along the river."

"Oh, bosh, Nagel," he laughed and put his hand on my arm. "The niggers are too lazy and the French too dull. You get some sleep, and we'll go out to the river. We'll do what you suggest." He smiled and seemed a different Von Harden. Suddenly he cleared his throat and spat. I looked after him curiously as he walked away. Was his acquiescence a pose? Or was I too doubtful that he was human?

That night we moved east by his compass. Two days later we saw a long range of wooded hills ahead of us.

"The river must be on the other side," he said after consulting his map. "Pretty soon we'll know."

We pushed on and reached the foothills. We started to ascend, and on the afternoon of the second day came to a cleft between two minor ranges from which we saw a huge expanse of open country spread out before us. And directly under us, we could almost throw a stone into it, was the broad, peaceful Niger, dotted with islands. There was not a sign of life on its surface. Nor could we see the smoke of any villages along its banks. The entire scene hung on the air, quiet and serene. Too quiet, perhaps. The river with its many islands seemed ideal for crossing. But into what? I was apprehensive. I couldn't have told why. Was it another trap?

I turned to Von Harden and found him peering intently upstream through his glass. I spoke to him, but he was absorbed. He was looking at something that held him. Something that caused him to grin—the same old grin I had seen before, and always with disastrous results.

"What is it?" I touched him on the shoulder.

He moved nervously and shook my hand off. After a moment he spoke, never taking his eyes from the glass.

"There's a foreigner's house up there on the opposite side."

He said it as casually as though he were viewing the Rhine from an excursion steamer. But it was no casual affair to me. I asked for his glass and after a time he gave it to me. Even as he did, he could not take his eyes from the new discovery. He was grinning, and his eyes were sparkling. He pulled at his beard and laughed outright. It was the same laugh I had heard when he had run down the gully to avenge Rodenbach.

I saw a small, square foreigner's house standing in a clump of mimosa bushes on a promontory that jutted out into the river and commanded a view up and down river for several miles. It was the same type of house as that used by ranchers in the Kamerun. There was an unroofed veranda in the front, with a window on each side of the door; and two windows on the side nearest us. I took it to be a large room inside, cut by partitions into four rooms, each with a window. The place was unpainted, and the shades had been drawn. It appeared desolate and forlorn. I looked to the back but could see no reason for its existence. It was not a sheep or an ostrich farm; the land around it was uncultivated. In Africa that gave it but one meaning, and now especially in the district in which we were—it was a shooting lodge. But whose? That too was easy to answer—somebody's from Timbuctoo.

"It's a shooting place," I said to Von Harden, "it belongs to somebody from Timbuctoo."

He didn't hear me.

"It belongs to the French officers from Timbuctoo. . . ."

"Eh?" He came out of the trance. "French officers . . . so much the better."

We took turns in studying that house until the sun went down. Then we alternated in sleeping and standing guard. We dared not risk a fire.

As I dozed off I wondered what was ahead. I had spoken to him several times, but he had not answered; the sight across the river held him. He'd smile, laugh, polish his glass with his cap, and look again. He paid little attention to me. It seemed to me as I wrapped the blanket around me that something had come over him.

"We need clothes," he said suddenly, as I tried to sleep. "I'll get them over there."

There was no question in his voice. He did not ask my advice. He had merely stated a fact which I could take or leave. I wondered if this was a return of the old Von Harden. I thought over our progress since Rodenbach's death. He had been friendly enough to me throughout, so solicitous that I had thought at times he was changing, becoming soft.

He had been friendly after his fashion, but I wondered as I lay there, high above the Niger, just how long that friendship would stand the test. I doubted that he had changed character because I had drawn a pistol on him. I doubted his sincerity. Up until now he had needed me with him. But now, with this foreigner's house in view, he had forgotten the immediate past as though it had been a part

in a play and he an actor. Now he would be himself. And evidently I could expect a return of the brusque, arrogant Von Harden . . . Herr Major von Harden. He who went through an African jungle with a monocle in his eye.

What lay ahead? I went to sleep with troubled thoughts.

**W**E WERE at the base of the hill the following morning before the sun was an hour old. We paused several times in the descent to use Von Harden's glass, but the strangely quiet character of the house across the river never changed.

"They've got a telephone," he said after a careful scrutiny, "the wires come from upstream. They don't continue past, down this way. The big town is north of us. Come on, let's get this over."

We made the fording about a kilometer above the house and at the expense of a dozen duckings that thoroughly soaked our equipment. Once I came up blubbering and shivering to find him completely out of sight. I watched him as he emerged cursing and soaking, the cap was drooping down over his ears, his beard ran water in rivulets, but his insolent monocle remained fast in his eye. Nothing, apparently, could dislodge it. Then I recalled that I had when I knocked him down. I wondered when the next time would be.

On gaining the shore he went immediately to his report and found it undamaged. The map of the Paris defenses had protected it, a bit of irony that caused me to chuckle. Rodenbach's and Müller's were equally safe. Everything else was wet. So much so that we dared not move farther

until we had cleaned our armory on leaves, grass, and what little remained of our clothing.

Our vigil in watching the house never relaxed. Suddenly we saw a thin wisp of smoke curling out of the rusty pipe that served for a chimney. That gave us cause for worry. Who was there? Was it a foreigner or a native? A man or a woman? We had to find out. The mystery was deepening.

While our clothes were drying we watched the river. Not a boat or a person was visible. Using the thick bush as cover, we scoured the area for a kilometer north and east of us, and all we found was a slightly used road running parallel with the Niger. It led north to the big city ahead. The telephone wires were strung along it on bambôo poles.

Once dressed, we cautiously rode downstream under the protection of the overhanging bank until we came within a hundred yards of our objective. Then we crept forward and crouched behind a thick growth of bush.

This side of the house was the same as the other. It had two windows, and the shades were down. We sat looking at it for a half hour and nothing happened. My imagination began doing queer things.

Had we been seen? Was a warm reception awaiting us? I could think of a thousand situations that might end the entire trip in the tiny mimosa patch where we hid. Von Harden advanced several theories—advanced them and answered them himself. I had been completely out of his mind since he had first seen the house.

We were wondering what to do. I had decided to walk out boldly and rap on the door, with Von Harden covering me from the bushes with his rifle.

Then suddenly, so suddenly that we caught our breaths, the door on the veranda opened, and a white-gowned native came out with his hands behind his back. He paused and looked up and down river. Stealthily one hand came around in front of him, and I saw he was holding a lighted cigar. He puffed on it savagely, then coughed and grimaced when he attempted to expel the smoke. Despite his discomfort his face was wreathed in a broad, white-toothed grin. That gave him away. I had known the same situation in my house in the Kamerun.

"He's alone," I said over my shoulder. "He's a servant. It's a foreigner's house. He'd never dare——"

"I can see all that," Von Harden snapped. "Here, hold this. . . ." He passed me the bridle of his horse, and before I knew what was happening he was bounding over the ground toward the veranda. Halfway there the native heard him coming. He threw the cigar off the far side, took one terrified look at the oncoming figure, and reached for the door, when I heard the familiar gruff voice:

"So you're a thief, you black devil. You steal your master's cigars. He'll beat the life out of you when I tell him. Where is he?" He was talking French. Wise Von Harden. He was an actor.

The native was a Senegalese and over six feet tall. He towered over Von Harden, but my companion was not to be awed by size. He was again the bantam rooster.

"Where is he?" he shouted.

The black hesitated. Von Harden took matters in his own hands. He sprang up and pulled him away from the door with such force as to spin him across the veranda. I

saw that Von Harden had one hand close to his pistol butt. The other was holding the door open. He was watching the black and at the same time trying to look into the house.

"Where is he?" he growled again.

Haltingly I heard, "My masters come tomorrow. . . ."

"Masters . . ." I felt a strange weakness in the pit of my stomach. It began to loom as the hunting lodge I thought it.

"So! . . . Tomorrow! . . ." Von Harden was saying. "How many are coming this time?"

"This time"—from Von Harden. I had to smile.

"Three . . ." timidously.

"Only three this time?" I could catch the surprise in his voice. "Where from now?"

The Senegalese hesitated, and Herr Major stepped toward him, his fist drawn back.

"Timbuctoo," the answer came.

I had to marvel at Von Harden's ability in a crisis. He knew exactly what to do, and his first step seemed always to take complete charge. He might do it in the arrogant Von Harden manner with natives, but it accomplished his aims. Nevertheless, I was not through with him, however skillfully he carried off things in the situation confronting us. I would watch him with the native. He wasn't going to beat him in my presence. Here might be where the explosion would come.

"So they sent you down to open the house and you steal their cigars." He shook his fist in the black's face. "I'll tell them about you."

The man cringed. He was bewildered. Suddenly Von Harden grabbed him and thrust him into the house.

"Get in there," he barked, "I want to talk to you." Then with a final look around he drew out his pistol, turned and stalked in, defiantly slamming the door behind him. I shook my head.

"So you're also a housebreaker," I said, half aloud.

I mopped my head with my arm, and my dirty helmet fell to the ground. I picked it up and looked down at my clothes. I was filthy. Everything I wore was in rags. My trousers ended well above my knees. Below them were only remnants of gum sneakers. I felt the long matted hair curling down my neck. Ahead of me was a house that promised much. It was a temptation. I was desperate.

I tied the horses to the bushes and walked around back of the house. On the way I did a lot of thinking. We were masters of the place until "tomorrow." Or were we? Perhaps it was all a ruse? And the three "masters"? Perhaps they were a dozen. The Senegalese might be smarter than either of us. I was so nervous, I began to wish I'd never seen the place. Still . . . I was desperate.

At the back I found a small garden growing lettuce, carrots, and several other vegetables. As I passed I saw a bright green snake sleeping in the shadow of a potato vine. I let it lie. Several scrawny hens were dozing inside a heavily wired chicken run.

If we got out quickly, I reasoned, we could get a supply of vegetables, chickens, and some eggs. I thought of going to Von Harden with the idea when I reconsidered it. He'd

stolen the play so far. I'd say nothing and see what followed. He didn't keep me waiting.

For something better to do I went into the chicken house, where I found four small eggs.

I put them in my pocket and went around to the front. The river was deserted. It was a sweltering hot day, but I was too occupied to notice that I was perspiring profusely. Suddenly I heard Von Harden's voice grating strangely on the primeval silence.

"I've a good mind to beat you now, you damned nigger, for stealing Capitaine Brabant's cigars."

I heard the boy whimper something in reply. I couldn't hear what, for I was laughing and shaking at the same time. Already Von Harden knew the name of the owner. And as for stealing—I wondered if the great Herr Major were planning to pay for anything he might come upon. If so—with what?

Suddenly the front door opened with a crash. Von Harden strode out on to the veranda. He saw me and motioned. His appearance caused me to gape in astonishment. He was stark naked and puffing contentedly on a cigar. His monocle glinted in his eye.

I sprang up the steps and followed him in. The first sight that struck me was more surprising than the discovery of him in the nude.

The native sat sewing in a room to the right. I couldn't believe myself. I went over and looked at what he was working on. It was the dirty military coat, the coat Von Harden was so proud of. I burst out laughing. The first

thing he had thought of . . . the most important thing . . . was the mending of that coat.

But he hadn't been idle. He was shouting at the black to hurry and meanwhile throwing open the drawers in a small bureau. Every few moments he would pause, pick out a shirt, look at it critically and either throw it back or onto a bed where I saw a half dozen. With them were socks and a pair of khaki trousers. The last were badly rumpled, and I knew he had tried them on before they had been selected. A pair of heavy shoes was on the floor.

"What's the matter, Nagel?" he asked me in German. "Get outfitted. Look around, look around."

I saw a native-built closet. It was filled with white clothes, neatly arranged on hangers. I pushed them apart to see what they were when Von Harden bounded away from the bureau and almost knocked me down in pushing me aside. He dove into the floor of the closet and came out with—all things—a pair of well shined riding boots.

"Now find some pants, and I'll be completely outfitted." He was laughing uproariously when the black surprised us.

"You can't take those," he said. "You can't take those. They belong to another officer. He is coming. You can't . . ."

"Take a cigar, Nagel." Von Harden ignored the interruption, offering me the box. He went over and sat on the bed, put on a pair of socks and tried the boots. They fitted him. His grin reached from ear to ear.

"Wake up," he kept saying, "wake up, Nagel—get outfitted. There are more boots. Get a pair, get a pair."

"I'll take the shoes," I said, "if I must take something."

Why must we rob this man's house? Let's leave the roof on, at least. Or are you planning to burn the place down?"

"Ha, Nagel, you're still a boy. These are Frenchmen, and I hate Frenchmen." He cleared his throat and spat on the floor.

The coat was finished, and the servant put it down. Languidly, as though we were in no hurry, Von Harden examined it at great length. Finally, approving, he turned to the black. "Put on more fire and fry those chickens," he said.

"Imagine," turning to me and speaking in French, "that damned nigger stole two chickens and was going to roast them for himself before his master got here!"

Meanwhile he was going through a trunk he had found under the bed. He pulled out several pictures of French officers. He spat on each one, then threw it back. Suddenly he gave a cry of joy.

"Here they are." He had found a pair of fawn-colored riding breeches. Piece by piece he began coming back. I was afraid that at any moment he might find a sword and become the Potsdam parade-ground despot all over again.

He went out after the black, whom we had heard clattering the stove lids. I followed him. One of the rooms at the back was the kitchen. It had a table and an old-fashioned stove that bore a French name. A fresh pile of wood stood behind it. The native was putting wood in and edging away from both of us. Von Harden pulled open the oven door. I saw two chickens in a pan.

"Fine, fine, nigger, now we'll eat. You fry a batch of that

rice bread." He took a cloth off a bowl on the table, revealing a mound of dough. Without a word the native washed his hands in a bucket near the door and began forming the dough into cakes.

I went into the third room. It was another sleeping room containing four beds. A pile of French magazines lay on a chair. A lantern hung from the ceiling. Something glittered on the floor, and I looked down. It was a cheap glass-bead trinket of the kind so dear to every native woman's heart that she would give anything to obtain it. I might have guessed it.

We were in a hunting lodge, but one kept for a dual purpose. It was a replica of many throughout Africa, where soldiers stay for years with their regiments and are deprived of the company of white women. The men who maintained it were stationed in Timbuctoo. The risk of detection there was too great; hence this establishment down the Niger.

I shrugged my shoulders and gave my attention to a large porcelain basin standing on a home-made table. Beside it was a fresh bucket of water. And on a shelf built against the wall under a mirror were three razors in cases and complete shaving paraphernalia.

"Seen any scissors?" I shouted.

"In the office," came Von Harden's voice from the kitchen.

I went into the fourth room and found a large desk, another bed, and a table of toilet necessities, eau de cologne, and powder. Pictures of French actresses were pinned around the room. Comments were scrawled under them

that were not always flattering. One or two bore dates and the names of French spas. A large map of the district was on another wall. Beneath it was the telephone. The top of the desk was bare, and I started out of the room with the scissors when I saw that one of the desk drawers was partly open. I could not resist the temptation.

I found it full of papers. Four scarlet sheets attracted me. They were held together with a clip. Absently I looked at the top one, when suddenly the blood ran cold in my veins. It had good reason to. I had been looking at a picture. I brushed my eyes and looked again.

It was a picture of myself. It had been taken on the French boat that had brought me to Lome. Below the picture I read:

*"Avvertissement. O Cherche . . ."*

The printed matter was in French, English, and Arabic. The English version told the entire story of our trip, the date I had left Lome, the date of my arrival in Atakpame, and when I had left Mangu. There was also the complete story of the desertion of our porters, the approximate astronomical position in the jungle where it had taken place, and the added information that a Gurma tribe had reported me as heading north after the breakup. What attracted me most was the lines:

*"This man has been of great value to his government in secretly mapping certain portions of Eastern Nigeria. For this a reward has been posted for him at Lagos. A further reward will be paid for his capture dead or alive for his part in the present overt acts against the Republic of France."*

The second circular held a picture of Rodenbach. Beneath it I read his entire story. The third was Müller's and the fourth Von Harden's. Herr Major was staring defiantly at the camera in a uniform covered in gold trapplings. The reward for him was three times the amount offered for the rest of us. "*Known to be a desperate character,*" was an added warning.

So the French were dull, Von Harden had said. They didn't know what was going on in the Sudan. And the "niggers" who had hounded us through the jungle had been smart enough to know approximately in what longitude and latitude they had last seen us.

I felt the blood pounding through my temples. He was a smart man, Von Harden. But when it came to protecting my life, I could do that without his help. I determined to let him know it. And since the French were so anxious to bring me down dead or alive, I'd give them something to remember me by. I'd take over the expedition from now on. I wanted adventure—I wanted to be a spy—well, now I was one, according to the circular.

I grabbed up the four pages and ran out to the kitchen. Von Harden was eating, wrapped in a dressing gown. The servant was waiting on him.

"Here," I said, "read this. . . ." I thrust the papers under his nose. He looked down at them.

"Oh, I saw those," he replied calmly. "Don't let them worry you. You might have expected them. I did. Here," he paused suddenly, picking them up and frowning at me, "save them for your grandchildren."

I caught a feeling that he was dismissing me as he would

have dismissed the servant. That I had interfered with his breakfast. One hand held the papers out to me, the other waved me away.

"Why didn't you wait for me to eat with you?" I shot at him. He was not putting me off so easily.

He paused quickly and looked up. I saw his eyes harden, his jaw set.

"You can eat later," he answered gruffly.

I refused to take the papers. He held them awkwardly with one hand; with the other he went back to the plate before him. Quite casually he lifted a chicken leg to his mouth. Then he turned to the Senegalese.

"After I've finished, break up the other chicken and fry it for him." He indicated me without looking up by waving the chicken leg. Then he resumed his slow munching.

"God damn your arrogance, Von Harden!" I screamed. "I'll kill you . . . I'll make you come to me yet . . . I'll——"

"Now, Nagel," he smiled wryly, "I'm in charge of the expedition. Remember that. It wouldn't do if we ate together. There must be some differentiation . . ."

"We ate together in the jungle."

"That was different. We're not in the jungle now."

He went on, half turning his back on me. I became so infuriated at his gesture that I knocked the papers out of his hand. I was so flabbergasted at his casualness, his snobishness, so boiling with rage that I didn't know what to do. I wanted to bury the scissors in his red neck. I wanted to kick him to a pulp. I took a step toward him when suddenly something happened that shot him out of his chair as though a shell had exploded in the room.

The telephone rang!

For a brief minute the three of us stood there looking at each other. Suddenly the native started away. Von Harden was after him with a bound. He pushed him against the wall and rushed into the front room. I heard him pick up the receiver as I followed him.

"*Oui, oui,*" I heard him saying. His voice was low and cool. Again he was the actor. He was smiling and gracious.

"Just this moment arrived, *mon capitaine*," he went on. "What's that, what's that? . . . Burem has been raided by the Tuareg Sidi Dena . . . he is heading east into the desert . . . depend upon it, *mon capitaine*, we will report back at once. . . ." I saw his face light up as though ten years had been taken off his shoulders. He arched his eyebrows; he was all concern. He looked around at me and grinned.

"How many men in his band, *mon capitaine*? . . . Ah . . ." His grin broadened. "Depend upon it, we will keep sharp eyes . . . we will report at once. What's that . . . assuredly this is Brabant, *mon capitaine*." His smile vanished in a flash. "Who? . . . who?" he went on. "Capitaine Pichon, he was here a moment ago . . . wait, I'll call him. . . ." He looked at me, there was something diabolical in his face. After a pause he turned again to the mouth-piece: "Pichon is outside . . . what? . . . assuredly this is Brabant. . . ." Then a thought came to him; I could see it in his smile. ". . . Someone is tampering with the wires. . . ."

He dropped the receiver, grasped the box, and with a violent exertion tore it from the wall and crashed it on the floor.

Then he looked up at me. His eyes were blazing.

"Now, Nagel," he snapped, "if you've forgotten your childishness we'll get out of this. Get shaved quickly, eat, and pack all the food you can get. Hurry! This is the biggest stroke of fortune we've had on the trip. Von Harden's luck never fails. I told you I'd get you out." He rushed past me into the kitchen and started wolfing what was left of his food.

I was so taken by the new turn I could not bring myself to resume the row. And I wouldn't ask him how he was going to get us out. I heard what he had said, and I could piece in the parts missing. I went back into the bedroom and started clipping off my beard. As I worked I thought over the entire situation. The French and English were after me, I was against Von Harden. But here was my succor. If I was to be saved, this was not the time to fight him.

As I shaved I heard him shouting at the native. In the thrill of escaping, my ethics about robbing the owners of the house vanished. They were after me. They were my enemies. I went into the front room and laid out what clothes I wanted, a shirt, the khaki pants, a white semi-military coat, the heavy shoes, and a felt hat with a large brim.

By the time I had finished shaving, Von Harden was having his hair cut by the Senegalese. That done, he shaved. Then he started dressing. The fawn riding breeches, the polished boots; he even found a pair of spurs. Then a shirt and his mended coat. As I saw him I could not help but interrupt.

"Take one of the Frenchman's uniform coats. It will be a wonderful disguise."

"What? Take their coat? Rubbish. I'll fight them in the uniform of a German officer."

He donned his old coat, smoothed it down, found a brush and worked on his service ribbons, and lighted a fresh cigar. Then he located several handkerchiefs, polished his monocle and screwed it into his eye. His cap came next. He moulded it back to its original shape and took a clean shirt to polish the insignia of his regiment on its peak. That completed, he looked at himself in a mirror and gave a grunt of approval. He tilted his cap a little more, screwed his monocle more firmly in his eye, and picked up his riding crop.

"Now," he said, "we are ready."

"We're ready," I answered him, "when I'm done eating. And I'm a slow eater."

I heard him clear his throat and spit.

**A**s I was finishing the chicken I heard the gruff voice of Von Harden rowing with the servant. He was superintending the bringing of the horses to the kitchen door.

Suddenly he snapped, "Wait, wait . . ." He was running. I heard his boots pounding on the veranda. I jumped up from the table and went forward through the rooms. I reached the front door. I was about to step out when I saw him almost at my elbow looking up river through his glass. The black was on the ground holding the bridles and watching him through wide, scared eyes. After a moment Von Harden stepped down. His voice was apprehensive and mocking.

"Here, nigger," he said, "take this and tell me what that is."

He pointed up river, and I saw his eyes narrow. I hesitated, held my breath. I watched and listened through the half-opened door. The black had the glass glued to his eyes, but I saw him snatch furtive glances at Herr Major.

"The mail boat for Gao," he said finally.

"Gao, eh?" I heard Von Harden sneer. "So we're between Gao and Burem. . . ."

I knew where we were. I knew. He did also. I had seen him studying the map in the office. The black nodded.

Von Harden was watching him closely. He was smiling again.

"Does it stop here?" he barked.

The black's eyes widened. "No, not stop here. Why should it stop here?"

"Quite so, h'mmm, quite so . . ." He was tapping his boot with his riding crop. He never took his eyes from the black's face. "How many does it carry?" he asked.

"Two," came the quick answer.

"Two niggers?"

"Two Senegalese." The black drew himself up until he was towering over Herr Major.

"Ah," mocking, and the smile merging into a grin, "two Senegalese." He turned away, and I went back to finish the meal. I didn't want to take any chances. I hurried. Yet I was hurrying no more than Von Harden, who, since the telephone message, had been all action, even though most of his energy had been expended in dressing himself.

I wondered why he didn't wait for the French officers. If he wanted to start a war against the French, certainly here was his opportunity. But he didn't, and he surprised me. He wanted to get out.

I heard them passing the kitchen window with the horses. A moment later they came in with the black carrying our knapsacks. The first thing Von Harden did was to open mine and extract the two remaining rolls of adhesive tape—the tape we had been left by our porters. He put them on the table and turned to the black.

"Quick now," he snapped, "pack all the food—every-

thing. Nagel," he turned to me, "help him. Something's on the river. Make it fast, we've got to move."

I didn't even look up at him. I finished my meal, lighted a fresh cigar, and started to don the new attire I had picked out for myself. It felt good to have my hair cut, to be without a scraggling beard, to feel clean clothes against my flesh. When I was through I went back to the kitchen. Two bulging knapsacks were waiting on the table.

Von Harden had meanwhile returned to the veranda to study the oncoming boat. What his deduction was I didn't ask. I wanted only to get out of that house. I was in stolen clothing, and I wanted to get away. At the same time it might have been wiser to stay until the following day and greet the French officers with bullets. Then I reasoned that being a thief was bad enough, being a deliberate murderer in addition to a thief was too much. I would flee.

Von Harden was in just as much of a hurry. Not until later did I discover his reason. It was not the same as mine. Finally we were ready.

"Now, nigger," Von Harden grinned, "you get in this chair." The black quaked and sat down. Then Herr Major did something that surprised me—another surprise in a long list. He began binding the wide-eyed native to the chair with the adhesive tape. He didn't ask me to help. He did the job himself, and all the time he was humming, he was so happy.

From my casual observation he did an excellent job. I wasn't paying much attention to him. I was too busy ranging through the house picking up our clothing and stuffing it into the fire.

"Why bother with that stuff?" he paused to ask.

"My helmet has a Lome label."

"Bosh, Nagel," grinning wider than before, "can't you see through all this?"

Evidently he didn't expect me to answer, for he bent down to his work and suddenly broke out whistling. I could see that he relished the task. When the tape gave out he found some ropes. In ten minutes the black was trussed up.

"Now that's done," Von Harden said, "let's get out."

We secured the knapsacks to our backs, strapped on the bandoliers, picked up our rifles, and left.

It was an odd leaving. We were better prepared for whatever was to come than we had been at any time since crossing the Togoland-Upper Volta frontier. I felt that if I could hold Von Harden down we would yet emerge out of it all. We hadn't been in the house two hours, yet the entire aspect of our trip had changed. We had arrived bedraggled, hungry, and weary. We were leaving with complete outfits of clothing, our knapsacks and stomachs bulging with food, and we were refreshed.

Ahead of me rode Von Harden, his chest out, his shoulders back, monarch of all he surveyed. He was grinning broadly. Sweat poured down his neck, but he would not unbutton his tight collar over which his red neck bulged. His monocle glinted in the sun. The only anachronism was that he was riding bareback—which bothered him not in the least.

Suddenly he reined in, snapped out his glass and turned it toward the river. I watched his face. His grin disappeared. He frowned. "I knew it," he muttered.

I looked out and saw the mail boat nearer than I expected it to be. It was coming downstream much faster than when it had first been seen.

He distracted my attention from the boat by whirling and looking at the house. Even as he held the glass to his eyes he cleared his throat and spat.

"Here," he said suddenly, thrusting the glass at me, "see what your dear nigger is trying to do." In the same motion he divested himself of his knapsack, his bandoliers, and his shotgun, retaining the Mauser. He dropped them on the ground at his feet. Then he dug his spurs into his horse's belly and dashed madly back.

"Wait here for me," he snapped over his shoulder.  
"Wait here for me."

When he had disappeared in a cloud of dust I looked out at the boat. What I saw gave me an uneasy premonition. I counted eight men on her tiny deck. They were Frenchmen in uniform. One was uncovering a rapid-fire gun in the bow. The others were gesticulating and pointing toward the house. I saw one who had more brass buttons than any of the others peering through a binocular in the same direction. A spade beard fell down over the front of his uniform. I made out a native feeding wood into the tiny craft's fire. The stack belched smoke; waves were breaking under the bow. They were in a great hurry.

Then I looked back at the house standing out clearly in the sun. On the roof—and I could scarcely believe my eyes—was the Negro Von Harden had tied so securely to the chair in the kitchen. He had freed himself of his bindings, climbed to the roof, and I saw him now frantically

waving a large white cloth on the end of a bamboo pole. His signals had been seen on the boat. The Frenchmen were rushing to him. Things were moving much too fast for my comfort.

For several moments I watched both scenes.

Then I heard a sharp, low-pitched thud. I knew it on the instant. It was Von Harden's Mauser. I looked at the roof and saw the Negro on all fours crawling off toward the far side. I could see a splotch of red blood on his side. The pole had fallen out of his hands and was standing grotesquely upright in a mimosa bush.

I knew that Von Harden would come clattering back any moment. Also that the native had lied to us throughout, that not three officers were coming, but eight, and that "tomorrow" was in reality today. He had tried to make things so easy for us that we would stay. Von Harden had read him like a book. We had been saved by the telephone.

That was it—the telephone. There was where I could help. I looked up and saw the wires above me. Not twenty feet away was a pole supporting them. I had to help Von Harden. Pursuit might mean death. Here was my chance.

I jumped off and tethered my horse to a bush. I drew my machete and started hacking at the telephone pole. It fell with a crash. I ran up the road to the next one and did the same thing. Then I cut the wire and came back to the knapsack, the wire trailing behind me. I cut it again at the first pole, rolled it up into a loop, and threw it as far out in the river as I could.

Then I looked to my guns. They were loaded for what-

ever might come. Those eight Frenchmen and their rapid-fire gun were warnings of trouble ahead.

A moment later Von Harden dashed up. He was grinning again. He saw what I had done.

"You might yet be of some value, Nagel," he greeted me. "Now let's get out of this." He donned his knapsack and accoutrements. He looked at his compass. "Go ahead," he motioned me with his hand in a way I resented. "Go ahead, go ahead." He was annoyed. I didn't like his tone. He was too pleased with himself.

"The great Von Harden running away?" I questioned. "Shooting an unarmed native . . . afraid, perhaps?"

Instead of getting angry, he laughed outright. I thought he had sensed that my wish to flee belied my criticism of his actions. He was in high spirits. He tugged his cap farther down over his eye, and in one motion, guns and knapsack on his back, leaped lightly on his horse.

"Does the head porter want to fight the eight Frenchmen?" he beamed.

I made a noise with my mouth.

"Don't let the details worry your infantile mind," he went on, still smiling. "You can't see farther than your nose. Why fight a few nigger-lovers? Bigger things are ahead in the desert."

I shouted something at him, but he had ridden away in a cloud of dust. I swung my pistol around closer to my middle.

I looked out on the river and saw the boat heading in toward the house. The Frenchmen were crowding her bow, anxious to leap ashore. Several had rifles. There was only

one thing for me to do. I spurred on after Von Harden as fast as I could. I saw that he was smoking a cigar, but he hadn't stopped to light it, as I would have had to do. The knapsack and rifles jounced up and down on his back, yet he rode saddleless with the grace of a cossack.

He would ride forward a kilometer, then draw up, consult his map and compass, and continue. Finally he found what he was searching for. It was as well he did, for a caravan of a dozen donkeys and a group of natives appeared in the road ahead. Von Harden pulled his horse off into the bush and kept going. We never got back to the river road.

I could still see the group of eight Frenchmen and the leader with the spade beard. They were too much of a handicap for me to overcome. I knew they couldn't pursue us from the house, and I knew that the black was only wounded. He would tell the whole story. They would find the cut telephone wires and connect their apparatus to the live end. That would mean we might have a head start of an hour. In any event, before nightfall I was sure that Burem would know of the entire affair. But how would they know it was us? That thought gave me consolation—for a moment.

Von Harden was heading straight north. Within a kilometer from the river the few scattered gum trees, the mimosa, and the coarse grass that gave a footing to our horses disappeared. We were confronted with an endless shimmering panorama. As far as the eye could see ahead of us the entire world was a sand dune. It stretched in every direction, aloof and tense, like the jungle, yet strangely different, for nothing on it was hidden, nothing

could hide. Overhead the sun glared out of a vast blueness.

Von Harden kept on. I floundered after him, sweating and tired, worried and apprehensive. I imagined sounds behind me. I'd whirl around suddenly, my pistol drawn, to find nothing more than the same broad expanse of gray-white sand, quiet, ominous. Within an hour the sun raised havoc with my skin as well as my mind. I felt my face and neck becoming sunburned despite the broad brim on my felt hat. I tore off the tail of my shirt and bound it around my neck. I looked forward to Von Harden and got no relief. He was the same as always, jaunty, assured, and untroubled. His neck was lobster red, but he did nothing about it. His fawn pants were soaked with perspiration, but he never looked down. His eyes were unwaveringly ahead. Something was beckoning to him. What was it?

Two hours after leaving the road we were lost in that breathless void.

It seemed to me that we had left the frying pan for the fire.

We went on, north, north, north, never wavering, never pausing. All the time my mind had been back in the house we had left. I had burned our clothes, there was nothing left to show who we were; we might have been any thieves of the desert.

Then I recalled our pictures. The native had seen me showing them to Von Harden. They would be the clue. They would give us away. I could hear the wires humming with instructions to bring us in. Now there was no escape, there was no dismal jungle, no heavy fog to hide us. We were out in the open for our pursuers to see. I began to

wish I was back in that jungle. I touched my rifle, and the hot barrel burned my hand. The jungle had been hell—this was worse than hell.

I rode forward and asked Von Harden where he was bound. He did not answer me. I saw him empty his water bottle within two hours of leaving the river, and I warned him but he paid no attention. His face was ahead. He was smiling and sure. Something was calling him.

But why were we heading into a certain death? Not until I recalled the episode of the telephone did I get a clue. I recalled his smile when he had spoken of the Tuaregs raiding Burem and fleeing east into the desert. Then I knew. He was heading to find them. Once they were located we were safe, his precious reports would get to Berlin. Kultur would gain an additional foothold on the dark continent. The Tuaregs would convey us from one caravan to another until our ankles were washed by the Mediterranean. Find them, and we would be saved. I spurred my tired horse ahead.

The sun went down, and we continued riding. Far off to the right we saw a series of rolling dunes of the same endless white sand. Von Harden drew up long enough to study the horizon in every direction. Then we made for them. An hour later we ate a meal in silence. Our horses were restless, unfed and unwatered, but he gave them no thought. He seemed to be living in a different world. He was unaware of the desert that held us in its grip. He was transfixed.

I knew he was playing on his luck, the Von Harden luck he had boasted about. He was gambling on a single toss of

the dice that he would find the Tuaregs. If he didn't . . . ? Again his duty had him. And now he would sacrifice me.

By the fading light we rode to a dune. The result was—nothing. I was so cold I began leading my horse. I dared not light a fire.

The darkness around me held thousands of French troops anxious for the first betrayal of our presence. Then it came to me I couldn't light a fire. Nothing was around us but sand. I began to miss the jungle I had cursed. The sighing of a tree, the chattering of a monkey in the branches overhead would have been sweet music.

We were feeling our way around the base of a second dune when suddenly, off on my right, I heard the cry of an animal. It was a hyena. Von Harden pulled up in a split second, but too late. It did not repeat.

"Hyenas in the desert?" I began asking myself. I sat on the ground and tried to answer the question while Von Harden went ahead.

I did not like the idea at all. I took off my Winchester, saw that it was ready, and got to my feet. I could hear Von Harden's horse shake itself. I started after him when it came again, this time on my left, lower-toned and more quavering than before. That convinced me.

They had located us and were signaling our presence. Instead of being surprised, I determined to surprise them. I ran straight toward the spot from whence the cry had resounded and found myself floundering around in the darkness. I fell flat on my face and listened. I clapped my hands, then ran away from the spot and listened. I could hear nothing.

I went back to the place where I had left my horse. When I got there I met the surprise of my life.

Von Harden was sitting on his horse talking to a white-robed native in French. I tried to speak to them and failed. I wanted to turn around and run. I wanted to raise my rifle, but was unable to make my muscles obey. I was shaking like a reed.

They were unaware of my presence. Von Harden gave me but a cursory glance and went on with his conversation. He looked like a field marshal giving orders to an aide.

The native began to move away, cutting over the crest of the dune. Von Harden jabbed with his spurs and followed. I took the bridle of my horse and trailed after them. We went over the hill and around another.

Suddenly I saw something on the ground. It looked like a hippopotamus asleep in a mud hole, its huge back half exposed. I heard it munching and saw its head, like a huge snake's. It was a camel. I circled it and came upon another. Then the darkness began to clear out of my brain, I saw many. In their center was a large cluster of skin tents, low and close to the ground. Men were squatting around them in groups conversing in barely audible voices.

I was following our guide when suddenly Von Harden halted. As I came up to him he leaned toward me. I could see his monocle gleaming in the darkness. The whole picture seemed unreal.

"Go ahead, Nagel, and announce that Herr Major von Harden of the German General Staff is here to reorganize this force for the capture of Timbuctoo. . . ."

... You will drive the French from the Sudan . . . the endless sands will again be ruled by followers of the True Faith . . . you complain that the Tuaregs are not united—it is a simple problem . . . first you must strike a staggering and decisive blow at French prestige in the desert . . . that is easy—you will capture Timbuctoo . . . then the recalcitrants will flock to your side, ready to help you in delivering your people from the French yoke of oppression . . . in one month, Sidi Dena, you will be undisputed ruler of a vast domain . . . you will find Germany always ready to help you . . . ”

This and much more I listened to for the remainder of the night as I crouched in Sidi Dena's small tent munching dates and sipping warm camel's milk. I looked at the men crowded around me. They were Tuaregs of the desert, and I could see in their excited whisperings over Von Harden's plans the remnants of the fierce cameleers who had swept out of the north in the seventeenth century and wrested a desert empire from the Moors.

They were tall men and lean, well proportioned and dignified. They were not as dark as Negroes, but had black eyes that snapped and seemed to crackle on the cold night air while a fire of scrub wood, picked up God knew where, gave us light. Sidi Dena was taller than the others; even now, sitting on a pile of rugs, his head was above theirs,

he was listening intently, his eyes never leaving Von Harden's earnest face.

I felt a thrill at being present. Here was the culmination of our trip. I was in the center of the web of international intrigue on a larger scale than I had ever dared hope. I was a spy, wanted by the French and British. A price was on my head. I would be a marked man for life. And now I was crouching in a smoke-filled tent, listening to an exponent of Kultur plot the end of French rule in the Sudan. It was a great moment. Because I was young, perhaps, I forgot all the past. Life had never been so good.

I watched and heard and said nothing. Von Harden was playing his trump card. Von Harden luck had been with us so far, it would not desert us now. I saw the hand of an omnipotent power that had brought us through the tribulations of the jungle, with death ever brooding over us but never claiming us, to this scene in a smoky Tuareg tent east of Burem. We had been preserved for bigger things. We might be remaking the map of the world. I was so excited I spilled the milk over my chin. I was oblivious of the fact that the dates were as hard as rocks.

For the benefit of his leaders who could not understand French, Sidi Dena translated what Von Harden was saying.

"... Your attack on Burem was ill advised. . . . Burem is a caravan stop . . . it is not important. . . . In a week a force would have come down from Timbuctoo and driven you out. . . . You must adopt a bold course . . . you must strike a blow that will weaken the French by the very daring of its magnitude. . . . Let me handle it for you. . . .

I will get in touch with German agents in Algiers, in Tunis, and in Tripoli, where they are legion . . . money will be forthcoming, guns, ammunition . . . we will hide in the desert and organize our forces . . . runners will go out tomorrow calling neighboring tribes to a conference. . . . I will have men in Timbuctoo working to undermine the native troops' loyalty to the French. . . . To the true Believer everything is possible. . . ."

Sidi Dena said little to Von Harden. To the other Tuaregs he said much.

My mind was racing. I was beginning to see that for all of Von Harden's overbearing manner and conceit he had a greater mind and more courage than any other man I had ever met. He had the broad vision, the imagination of the empire builder. I had missed seeing the forest for the trees. Despite his petty weaknesses, his vanity, his intense egotism, it was he who, after all, was the great character of the trip. I had stooped to trifles, but his head had always been out of the common ruck. He was a dreamer and doer. He had always been the leader, and as much as I had hated him I recalled that I had always looked to him for guidance, regardless of my frequent determinations to stand on my own feet. I recalled our ride from Atakpame to Sokode, and I flinched inwardly at the memory of my petty conduct. I regretted my cheap revenges. Through it all he had been inflexible. He had never wavered in character or purpose. I visioned again my fight with him at Müller's death. I lived over the moment I had drawn a pistol on him. In each instant he had remained in character. He had stood like a rock. He was Von Harden, and he

never changed. I sought an excuse for my conduct in the knowledge that I was young. But the excuse left a bitter taste. And it came to me that against his strong character I could not stand up. I was not of the same mould. He had never stepped down. Perhaps all men led on by a dream were of the same domineering type as Von Harden. They had to be ruthless, they could brook no interference. Who could tell? I might have been floundering through the jungle with a Clive in embryo, a military Cecil Rhodes, a Kitchener. I think that at that moment I saw the real Von Harden for the first time. He became a great figure to me. The more I looked at myself the smaller I became. I gnawed on dates until my gums were bleeding. I didn't care. I was in the company of the great.

My reveries were interrupted, and the conference came to an abrupt end when the cry of a hyena floated out of the quiet night air. It caused an instant stir in the camp. The fire was doused, and we crawled from the tent. The groups of squatting men outside were apprehensive. Most of them had risen and were looking out into the darkness, listening, waiting.

Suddenly we heard a companion cry. Both had come from the west—the direction of Burem. I thought of the men who had beaten off Sidi Dena's assault—the man with the spade beard—the telephone. . . . In a flash I was back again to realities.

Near by a sleeping camel awoke, sniffed, and was restless. Others took the cue. A dozen men grabbed their snouts. When they let go, the intelligent beasts were quiet, but they did not resume sleeping. A man in the gloom be-

side me reached out and touched a companion on the arm; both nodded. We all listened in a silence as complete as death.

I could hear nothing. I cupped my hands to my ears and strained, but the only sound was a faint sighing of the wind. Yet the Tuaregs had gotten messages. They were trained in the language of the desert. A sound that was beyond my ability to hear meant volumes to them.

Suddenly a sentry glided in and whispered to the group behind me.

"We have visitors," I heard Sidi Dena say at Von Harden's side. "There are sixty-four camels . . . the French . . ." Here was the end of my dream.

I counted thirty-eight camels around me. Suddenly I was conscious that dawn was breaking. It became lighter, the gloom began to thin out, I could see the dunes that cut us off from the outside. On the top of each were the smudges that were sharp-eyed, keen-eared Tuaregs.

A moment later the hyena cry came from the opposite direction. Then another, which caused a conspicuous stirring around me.

"They are too many for us," Sidi Dena said suddenly, "it is wiser to flee. We will move before it is light. . . ."

He spoke to several men. Tents were rolled up. Camels lunged to their feet. These were not cumbersome pack animals, but swift-running camels, bred for their speed in Tuareg strongholds far in the desert. I had been told they could do fifty miles a day. Looking at their lean, muscled bodies I believed it.

Camels were provided for Von Harden and me. Our horses were to be left behind. They would be too slow.

We heard the hyena cry again. A moment later it reechoed.

"They are on three sides," Sidi Dena said calmly, "the fourth is still open. Lose no time." He turned and pointed to a defile in the dunes behind us.

We stood about, nervously watching the gray streaks widen. The dunes became more discernible. Suddenly we heard a bugle. It rang out sharp and cutting on the silence, chilling me to my bones.

I looked at Von Harden and saw his face break into a grin. His shoulders stiffened, and his monocle glinted in the growing dawn. He snapped the breech of his Mauser and laughed aloud. He patted the stock. Suddenly he bent forward and brushed his boots with his sleeves. Then he dusted his service ribbons with his cuff.

"We will drive these French nigger-lovers back," he announced rather than said to me. "Come on."

He ran agilely up to the top of a dune. I grabbed my bandoliers, the machete, our knapsacks, and followed.

The desert stretched before us in every direction. A few score yards away a squad of camels were standing, towering above the white uniforms that moved among them. Another group was a half kilometer away. Beyond them still others.

Von Harden studied them through his glass while I laid out our equipment. We were on our stomachs. The rifles rested on the crest of the dune. I put our bandoliers on one

side of us and our pistols on the other. The knapsacks with the reports were behind at our feet.

I heard Von Harden curse, then clear his throat and spit. He put the glass down and, drawing out a handkerchief, rolled over on his side. He polished his monocle and screwed it firmly into his eye. Then he got to his knees and pulled down his coat. After that he brushed his regimental badge on the front of his cap. Then he put the cap on and pulled it jauntily down over his eye. With a final survey of himself he stretched forward on his stomach and took up his Mauser.

Meanwhile I had picked up the glasses and snatched glances at the men before us. With the first look at their faces I knew what had made him spit. They were in French uniforms--but they were Senegalese tirailleurs. I could not see a white man among them.

They were the "niggers" he hated so much, the "niggers" he always had underestimated, they were of the same race as the servant he had wounded back in the house on the Niger.

His Mauser went off with a crack, and I saw one of the camels snap up its head. Instantly the men around it became active. They grabbed their bridles and started running back, away from us. Von Harden sent two more shots after them; I saw one man go forward on his face.

Herr Major burst out in a loud laugh of derision. "*Schweinhund!*" he screamed.

Then he got suddenly to his feet, shook his fist after them, and ran down the hill to Sidi Dena's side. The others clustered around him. I lay on my back and listened.

"They're niggers," I heard him shouting. "Give me five men to hold them back, and you get out the opposite side with the main body."

There was a low-voiced conference. ". . . No, no," I heard Von Harden shouting agitatedly, "they're niggers, they haven't brains enough."

Sidi Dena was arguing with him, but Von Harden angrily waved his protestations aside. "They don't know enough, they haven't the nerve. . . ."

The discussion went on heatedly for several moments when Von Harden broke away and came up to me with several Tuaregs. They fell flat on their stomachs and thrust their long guns over the natural breastwork before us. Our position was impregnable. We didn't give the Senegalese a three-inch target at a hundred yards. They would have to be phenomenal marksmen to dislodge us.

"The wells of El Doura," someone shouted from below. Von Harden waved his hand in reply. I looked again at the scene behind me. I saw several camels standing hobbled for us while the others were being mounted. Rifles came out from under voluminous garments, daggers flashed in the light, spears, swords. The group thinned out in a long line and began moving away toward the defile.

The Tuareg on my right fired the first shot. I looked up and saw that the French had only withdrawn their camels out of our range. Now they were coming forward well spread out, kneeling, firing and advancing on a broad front. I let go with my Winchester at the one directly in front of me and saw him grab at himself and fall kicking into the dust.

The sun was coming up.

Someone on my right hit a tirailleur in the shoulder so hard as to whirl him completely around, even though his knees were in the thick sand. It could only have been Von Harden's big-game Mauser.

A Tuareg clicked his teeth every time he hit. They were laughing, commenting, and keeping up a running fire of talk among themselves. I had missed only two shots out of seven. Von Harden's grin never left him.

It was a one-sided fight. It lasted about fifteen minutes, when the bugle sounded and the tirailleurs crawled away, dragging their wounded and dead out of range.

"That's the end of the damn niggers," Von Harden snorted. "Only one thing for them to do, but they haven't the courage." He looked around, but the Tuaregs couldn't understand him.

It was beginning to get hot; the sun seemed to have hesitated on the horizon then leaped up with a vengeance. I looked back and saw Sidi Dena and his men disappearing through the narrow defile. They were as good as out.

Von Harden stood up boldly and studied the field through his glass. As he did, his smile slowly melted. He frowned. Then I saw lines of worry creep under his eyes. His high spirits vanished.

"They're coming again," he growled to me. "If they get close, give them the heavy lead."

I picked up my Jefferies. It would be deadly at short range. Once they struck, the soft-nose bullets would flatten out into a slug two inches wide. I gloated over the knowledge now, and for a strange reason. It may sound odd for

me to say after my previous feelings for him, but as I looked out at those tirailleurs I was not fighting for myself. I was fighting for Von Harden. I wanted to see them thrown back, wiped out. I wanted to see Von Harden and his little band crash through the walls of Timbuctoo. I forgot Kultur, I forgot the Junkers, I saw only the thin wasted man at my side. I wanted him to come out on top, though I knew if he did there would be no reward for me. I suspected how he felt toward me, and I couldn't very well blame him. It may have been a weakness in my character, but my hatred had turned to something else. Sometimes now I think it was a love, a strange, diffused love, but nevertheless sincere.

I went back to my Winchester and saw that it was ready. Von Harden looked around and watched Sidi Dena disappear.

A bugle sounded out ahead.

The tirailleurs had mounted. They had gone farther away from us, and now were coming forward in single file at top speed. The target was extremely difficult, for if one missed the leader his shot went into the sand. We had to hit a wavering ribbon. A Tuareg shouted and moved his hand with his wrist held still to show us the maneuver. We saw it enacted quickly enough.

When they got to the bottom of the dune the leader stopped short and waited for the others to spread around him like an opening fan. Then the bugle sounded, and they came pounding up into our faces. I worked the Winchester until it was empty. I didn't waste much lead. The target was too big once they had charged. At close range I gave

them the elephant gun. I heard Von Harden's Mauser thudding out, then the lighter shotgun. Above it all I could hear the squealing of the camels. It seemed they weren't twenty yards away from us when it came.

The line hesitated, wavered; camels were pulled sharply away and went pounding down the hill in confusion. I looked over the top and saw a giant Senegalese entangled in his saddle. His camel was wounded and thrashing about. The tirailleur couldn't extricate himself. I heard the Tuaregs laughing at the humor of his closeness. One of them raised his gun. I was waiting for him to shoot when I heard a groan on my right.

My breath caught. I didn't dare look toward it. I felt my blood grow cold. Then I heard a gurgling cough.

It was Von Harden. He had been hit. Before I could bring myself together sufficiently to turn to him I heard his voice.

"Nagel, you get the reports to Berlin—the Wilhelmstrasse . . ."

I looked around at him. He was clutching at his throat. A red smear of blood was running down over the front of his coat. His service ribbons were blotted out. He was upon his knees fumbling at his throat when suddenly he slid forward and fell on his face. I grabbed his leg, rolled him over on his back, and pushed him sliding down the hill. His Mauser slid along behind him. I left everything and scurried down in a swirl of sand. He was badly wounded. My world crashed around my head. My surroundings became blurred. I found myself mumbling a prayer.

I propped him up and reached to undo his tight collar.

He pushed my hand away angrily. He tried to speak but failed. He began spitting blood. He glared at me through his monocle.

"Get those reports out," he said with difficulty, a whitish foam gathering at the corners of his mouth. "If you can't, bury them . . . bury them . . . don't let the Fren . . ."

I knew now how his mind was working. I saw that at the moment I couldn't do anything for him. I ran up the hill, got the reports, put them back in a knapsack, and buried them in the sand at his side.

He watched every move. But my mind hadn't been on what I was doing. I had been thinking of him. In those few seconds I relived every moment of our trip. I was so nervous I wanted to do something—I didn't know what. I looked back over everything, then turned to him. His mouth was hanging open, the sun glared down, and his jaunty cap and the inevitable monocle were standing out grotesquely in my blurred vision. There was only one thing I could do. I had to do it or hate myself ever after. It was my chance to redeem myself.

I extended my hand. "I've been rotten to you, Von Harden . . . Herr Major," I corrected myself unconsciously, "the past is forgot . . ."

He sneered at me. He was still the rigid militarist. Above life or death he was Von Harden. He could not change character. His chin was out, and his shoulders were back. The smear on his chest crept wider, bubbles of blood were creeping up over his collar.

I grasped his right hand. I had never known before how small it was. "I'm sorry for everything . . ."

"Forget sentiment," he snarled at me, his eyes never leaving my face. "Get the reports back. . . ." It had been too much. He gagged and was in increased pain.

Then I got an inspiration. I'd redeem myself in spite of him. I'd get him out. I ran over and untied one of the camels. Suddenly a bugle blew. I could hear one of the Tuaregs shouting to me. I looked up, and he motioned me to the top of the dune. I heard the crack of a rifle. I had little time to waste.

I grabbed up the lead line and pulled the camel to Von Harden's side. By kicking its knees I brought it down. Then I stooped to pick him up. I would tie him in the saddle. With my Winchester I could hold off pursuit. I must do it. I must get him through. I had never wanted anything so much in my life.

Something caused me to pause. I looked at him and felt my mouth fall open. I was unable to speak. I wanted to scream. For a moment I couldn't see anything. I had been looking at the unbelievable.

His head had slumped forward. His cap had fallen off and was at his side, bottom up. As I looked, the monocle fell down on his chest and slid off onto the sand. He made no motion to retrieve it. Then I knew. The monocle told me, the monocle I hated.

I stooped down and was about to shake him when the firing above me grew deafening; screams and yells crowded out all else. The Tuaregs were shouting at me. I saw one of them using my Winchester. I heard the bugle blaring madly. The dune seemed to quiver and rumble under my feet. I remembered Von Harden's injunction. At least I

could do this much for him. I turned away from the camel that offered flight.

I started floundering up the hill, and as I came close to the top the long legs and bulking body of a camel shot over the crest and seemed to leap at me out of the air. I saw a grimacing Senegalese swinging a rifle. I reached up to ward it off when something struck me on the head. I felt my knees buckle under me . . . dimly I heard bugles blaring all around me . . . something wet and hot was running out of my hair over my face and down my neck. . . . I saw the slumped body of Von Harden below me, desolate and alone . . . then I felt myself falling, falling, falling into a bottomless black void. . . .

**T**HE events that followed Von Harden's death I can record only with the unreliability of a confused mind. I was living in two worlds. My continued existence I lay to the whim of a kind providence busy elsewhere with more important things. I saved myself by going crazy.

I have a jumbled picture of the tirailleurs dashing through the defile in pursuit of Sidi Dena and leaving me behind with a badly smashed head. I see myself beside the inert form of Von Harden, digging, digging, digging as though my life depends upon it. My fingernails are broken and my hands blistered but I dig with the mad frenzy of a man possessed.

I have a recollection of myself wandering in the desert; the dunes have merged behind me into the dismal grayness that stretches as far as the eye can reach, and hugged to my breast is the heavy knapsack. My head is pounding like a trip-hammer, and my hair is a crusted mass of congealed blood. My hat is gone, and I am sweating from every pore.

I recall myself jouncing on the back of a camel. I am securely tied to the saddle. I am swathed in fold after fold of black cloth. I am in native dress, I feel the burnous that shields my head from the glaring sun, I look at my ankles and find that my pants have not been removed. I

recall the dark eyes of men looking into mine. I look behind and see a long line of patient camels. The men are pointing at me and whispering among themselves. My knapsack is crushed to my breast. Darkness sets in; my eyes are open but I cannot see, I begin to scream, and the men whisper, nod, and leave me. I scream, and the tears flow.

Again I come out of the mists at a water hole. Date trees are growing around me. The camels have been watered and are dozing on the ground. Their fat bellies are like balloons tempting a pin. A small boy comes to me with a goat-skin full of camel's milk. I drink it greedily. From time to time the dark-eyed men gaze at me from a polite distance and turn away when I shout at them. My head is pounding. I am glad of the blackness that returns and takes me to another world.

I am in a small tent. An aged man with a white beard is feeding me and chanting. His voice drones on the stillness. From time to time veiled men come to the flap and look in. I feel a score of fingers pointing at me. The voices are low and gentle. They talk of me furtively, the way they might talk of Mohammed. I begin to piece it all together. I start at the beginning, when it melts away and I am screaming.

My camel is carrying me through the whitewashed gates of a city. A squad of desert patrol is drawn up for inspection. I see their sleek running camels, their white uniforms. Somewhere in the back of my mind there is a vague recollection. I have seen it all before. No one pays any attention to me. Wrapped in my native clothing and burned by the sun I pass for a native. Suddenly a giant Senegalese saun-

ters by me leading his camel. As he sees me he grins, I see his white teeth. The sight of him stirs a somnolent cell in my brain. Slowly the blackness vanishes. In a flash the past is back. I can see it all. I see Von Harden again with his broad grin supreme over death. I have the knapsack under my arm.

The cunning of the demented takes possession of me. I say nothing, but carefully observe my surroundings. I am part of a caravan. I know that I have been mad and have been picked up in the desert. Then I understand. The Koran says that the man possessed is in communication with the True Prophet. Hence my good treatment.

The aged man comes to feed me once we have made camp.

"True brother of the lost, where are we?"

"Insala, oh, my poor son."

"Where are we going?"

"In thirty days we will be in Algiers."

I gag on the locusts and honey, shout gibberish and beat my sides. He leaves me. For thirty days I scream and shout, but the mists have not come back. The thirty-first day we see the mosques of Algiers, and I am quiet. I watch and say nothing. My saviors are Moors. Where they plan to take me, or what they intend doing with me, I do not care. I am still in French territory, and I have to be watchful.

That night we camped in the old caravan quarters. Once my hosts were asleep I had little trouble in strolling away, my knapsack hidden under my flowing robes. I dodged

through several lanes and came to a dank, evil-smelling field. The bleating of goats warned me it was deserted. Here was my chance. I threw off my desert clothes and soon was lost in the maze of winding streets that make up the city.

I walked all that night, and when morning broke I was sitting on the steps of the German consulate. When it opened I went in to see Herr Konsul. I was met by an underling who wanted to put me through a third degree. My business was confidential and highly important. He looked at my sunburned face, my long and disorderly hair, and my grimy clothes. Herr Konsul was busy. In any event, I would have to approach him through the second secretary. The second would, I knew, hear all I had to say and dismiss me. In case he passed me over to the first I would have to go through another grilling. But it was worth it.

The underling, still wary of me, took in my name to the second secretary. As he left me I could not overlook his sleek grooming, his air of assurance, his thinly veiled arrogance. He was another exponent of Kultur. They all were. The Junkers were ruling Germany.

The second secretary kept me waiting a long hour. He wanted my story, but I would not divulge it. I gave him the name of Herr Major von Harden of the Imperial General Staff. It meant nothing. I mentioned Von Krocke and was looked upon with a thinly veiled suspicion. I pleaded with the secretary that I could give my story to no one but Herr Konsul. He was adamant. He studied me through narrowed lids. Herr Konsul was a busy man, he

could not see every wild schemer who came along. And it was the secretary's duty to protect Herr Konsul from becoming involved in unsavory schemes that might involve German . . . Then I began to see a light. I knew. They were afraid of me. I might be a French spy setting a trap . . . I might be . . .

Abruptly the second secretary left me. The day availed me nothing. Finally I was escorted out by a guard with the various secretaries watching from behind drawn blinds.

I was hungry and had no place to sleep. I went back to the field and shivered through the night with my head on my knapsack.

The following day I returned to the consulate around noon. I had spent the morning in planning a campaign. But by a lucky chance the underlings were out—the first secretary deigned to see me. He was even more cool than his assistants. After hearing me out his eyebrows were raised still higher, his suspicions were more firmly fixed. I compromised by requesting passage to Germany—a workaway on the first ship. Now his suspicions were confirmed. He even refused me funds for food.

"But I too am a German," I pleaded. "I have served Germany in the army . . ." He stopped me. It was all useless. I knew he had long since sized me up from my accent. I was not of his class—not of the Junkers. I could see from there action in his eyes. "I have been months in the desert. I have reports for which three loyal Germans gave their lives. I have crossed the Sahara as a crazy man to give these reports to the proper authorities. At least give me food . . ." Nothing I could say would soften him. He was

doing his duty as he saw it. Again I was escorted to the door by the guard—this time not so gently.

I wandered about the city and fell in with a young German sailor. He was on a Hamburg-bound ship, then to New York. His accent was the same as mine. I didn't have to ask him for help. He bought me food and gave me pocket money. That night I slept aboard his ship.

"I'll stow you away, Fritz," he offered. "I've been on the beach myself. I know what it is to ask for help, from the Junkers most of all. Every country has Junkers. But there are none to compare with ours. Come home with us. We lay over a week, then sail for New York. At Hamburg some of the crew will desert, and you can be signed on . . ."

I listened entranced. I had not told him what was in the bulging knapsack I carried. He knew nothing of me save that I was a German like himself, a low-caste German, if you like, and in trouble. He was the first countryman who was kind to me. My resolutions began to waver. The old hatred of Kultur flared anew.

I came to realize that after the freedom of Africa there would be no place for me in the Germany of the day. I was not one of the people who ran things. I would be an underling all my life. I could fight for them in the war to which they looked forward, but I could have no individuality. But in America . . .

I would make one more try. I owed that to Rodenbach and Müller.

I waited all morning. Herr Konsul was busy as always. If there was someone else . . . There wasn't. Two guards were always close by me. I knew they had had instructions.

But again good luck was with me. Toward noon a beggar found his way into the courtyard and wailed his poverty. The guards sprang to oust him. As they did I leaped for Herr Konsul's door.

He was leaning against a mantel. A teacup was in his hand, a soft, white hand, almost a copy of that I had seen across Von Krocke's dinner table on our last night in Lome. A beautiful young woman was seated beside Herr Konsul's desk, drawing languidly on a cigarette. On first sight of me Herr Konsul bristled. He was short and stocky; I could almost see the hair rise on his closely cropped head. A monocle was in his left eye. He glared at me, and the corners of his mouth dropped. His chin jutted out, and he frowned. . . .

"I've been waiting three days . . ." was all I managed to say. He clapped his hands, turned and bowed to the young woman, and as I watched him my glance was attracted by a full-length picture of the Emperor, resplendent in full uniform, his mustaches upturned in the familiar fashion, the glare in his eye, the firm set of his mouth, like all of his followers, anointed of God, rulers of the world.

The guards bounded into the room. A moment later I was in the street outside.

". . . *Schweinhund*, know your place!" someone shouted after me.

I wandered along the docks until I found my sailor friend. He welcomed me with food and friendship, and I didn't know his name. That decided me.

Two nights later we saw the lights of Algiers glimmering behind us on a blue sea.

We were a cargo ship, and the after deck was deserted. Here was my chance to put into execution the plan I had conceived. It would be my supreme revenge against Kultur. I thrilled in anticipation. My only regret was that the staff of the Consulate was not present to watch me.

I crept from my hiding place in a lifeboat, my knapsack hugged to my breast. I dodged to the after rail and found myself alone. Only a blue wake disturbed my composure. I had never been so sure of myself. My mind was made up, and the setting was perfect. I opened my knapsack—here was one of the great moments of the trip. Here was where I did my part to keep the “benefits” of Kultur from the African natives I understood and loved.

Gingerly, almost reverently, I lifted out one of the reports. By a coincidence, it was Von Harden's. I grasped a score of its pages in each hand and was about to rip it to shreds when something stopped me.

I was unable to proceed. My strength seemed to leave me. I felt a curious weakness come over my body. I can't explain it. I know only that I could not go ahead with my revenge.

It wasn't anything tangible that prevented me. I was alone, and the Mediterranean was beneath me, beckoning. The setting was perfect. But when it came to destroying that report—I could not. For several moments I stood there as though in a trance, and in those several moments I relived every episode of the great adventure.

I saw myself hiding again behind the boathouse on the Lome beach, anxious to get a first glimpse of the “big-game hunters” I was to lead on safari. I saw Müller mop-

ping himself and wheezing. But shining out like a beacon light in my consciousness were the monocle, the tilted cap, the riding boots, and the arrogant air of the man I hated—yet didn't hate. I saw Rodenbach again at our first meeting, but he also was blotted out by that overpowering personality striding across the station at Atakpame, his uniform the center of attraction for every black in the crowd. I lived over the marching by fours. I felt again the same tremors of fear as when he had insulted the native chief, and I sweated afresh in that camp lost in the jungle. I struck him as I had upon the discovery of Müller's suicide. I drew my pistol on him as at Rodenbach's death, and I thrilled anew at every turn of fate in our flight out to the Niger. I went back to the house on the river, the fateful house that was the height before we were plunged to the deepest depth. I saw him, the bantam cock, take over as though by divine right the handling of Sidi Dena's irregular cameleers, and no one thought to deny him. I saw him sprawling down the dune while he cursed his luck at thus being saved by death from a fate worse than death—for the French would have made short shift of him, and the desert never would have told. I saw him . . .

I knew then as I had never known before. Dead though he might be, I could not divorce myself from his influence. He refused to be put aside, and now in my moment of triumph he returned to rule me. I knew in the split second in which I looked down at his report that I could not go through with what I had planned and gloated over. Von Harden was too strong for me, he reached out from the beyond.

I bowed to him again, though we were a thousand miles apart, as I had so often bowed in the past. Perhaps I was weak, perhaps strong. Call me a sentimentalist—I have no defence. I only know that I was incapable of doing otherwise than I did. I put the report back in my knapsack and crept forward to my hiding place. I felt a Judas even to have considered betraying him.

Nineteen days later I reached Hamburg, and on money furnished by my sailor friend I hastened to Berlin. There I met the same situation I had at Algiers, only on a larger background. The underlings to whom I found access were not even third secretaries to a man in power, and the heads of departments were much more distant than the next room. There would be no bounding through an inside door to reach my goal. I was referred here and referred there, and my efforts came to naught. Even the buildings were cold and distant, the War Department most of all.

I talked to some petty politicians, but they knew nothing. The war scare was long since forgotten, or delayed to a more propitious opportunity. England, France, and Belgium were rumored to be in a secret agreement, and Germany bided her time. Morocco was far away and with Von Harden's reports overdue by months, I felt that all records of us were buried deep in the forbidding gray vastness of the War Department. We had become merely agents of the government who had failed, and we were forgotten.

I thought and thought. I could not desert him now. Finally like a ray of light it came to me. I knew where to place the reports so they would be brought to the proper

authorities. Two days later I got off a train at a station in the Black Forest. I footed it along a winding road and eventually came to the estate I had located in the Almanach de Gotha. It looked cold and austere, like the man I expected to find within, like the man who had been born and raised behind its imposing stone wall.

I was admitted and found him just as Müller had pictured him that day so long ago. Like the man I came to tell him of, he was in uniform. Though he was bent by age, yet, somehow, he was erect, and at the first mention of his son's name I caught the slightest gleam in his eye.

But only for a second. He was all business, coldly impersonal, the personification of the iron-hearted Prussian militarist. I could account then for every characteristic in Von Harden's make-up.

His eyes never left my face. I found myself turning away from his steady scrutiny. He never sat down, but stood erect before me, as though he was impatient for me to complete my business and leave him. I think now that that was his intention. But I was not to be downed without a fight.

I poured out the whole story of our trip. I spared him nothing. Only once, when I spoke of Von Harden wanting to leave Rodenbach and get the reports out while there was yet a chance for us to escape, did he unbend:

"My son was right, he had his duty to perform. The reports were what he was sent to get." His words were clipped short, precise. I knew then that he too would have sacrificed anyone in his insane devotion to duty.

I told him of the mad scene in Sidi Dena's tent when,

knowing that we were outnumbered by ten to one in the Sahara, Von Harden hatched a wild scheme to unite the tribes in a war against the French.

"Exactly," he half growled, "exactly. Just what he should have done."

I could not get beneath his skin. As I described Von Harden's death I looked up to see the old gentleman immersed in a large map of France I suddenly saw was framed on the wall. That was too much for me. He seemed more concerned with carrying on the destinies of Germany than hearing the manner of his son's death.

I took my departure. He did not even see me to the door but had a servant show me out, and as I crossed the threshold I glanced back and saw him fumbling with the precious reports. I knew then, though he had not relented until he thought he was beyond detection, that they would not be neglected. They would get to the proper parties. Then I felt better. I had carried out my part of the trust placed in me by Von Harden. For the first time in weeks I breathed easier; a weight seemed to be lifted from my chest.

I tramped back to the station and on the way made the discovery that after the long ride and my impassioned talk I was famished. I recalled then that the old General had not offered me any refreshments; other recollections came back to me. He had not asked me to sit down, he had remained standing as though to hurry me, and he had not even offered to send me back to the station in a trap. It seemed odd treatment of a man who had come thousands of miles to tell him of his son's death. He must have known

that I was destitute. I looked it, and I had mentioned borrowing money to reach him. But he made no move to finance me.

I soon saw why. It was the same old barrier all over again, the barrier that had caused me to leave Germany years before—Kultur. That was it. He was a Junker of the Junkers, I was not. There was the whole story. I fumed to think of it, for I knew it was so. And I wondered at the future of Germany once those of my class were awakened to what position they had been brought by the "*Me und Gott*" Junkers. There would be a great awakening some day, and though I was anything but a revolutionist, I could see no other way. But I would be no part of it. I made my mind up in that coach on the way back to Berlin. I determined to fall back on my original plan.

From Berlin I went to Hamburg, where I signed the ship's papers as a workaway to New York. I cut all ties behind me.

Three years later the war which Von Harden and his fellow Junkers so fervently had wished for broke on the world. The German Army went through Belgium, despite France's knowledge of the Von Schlieffen plan, as the German military had anticipated. Their machine was invincible.

The day that Liége fell I read the account while working for a German farmer outside Milwaukee. My thoughts went back to that jungle hell on the Niger. For a moment Von Harden lived again.

I saw his bulging neck, his shining boots, his tightly fit-

ting coat with its rows of campaign ribbons. I heard the tap-tapping of his riding crop, and I saw his monocle glinting in the sun.

"You were a great man, Von Harden," I said, "a very great man." And there was no malice in my voice.

THE END